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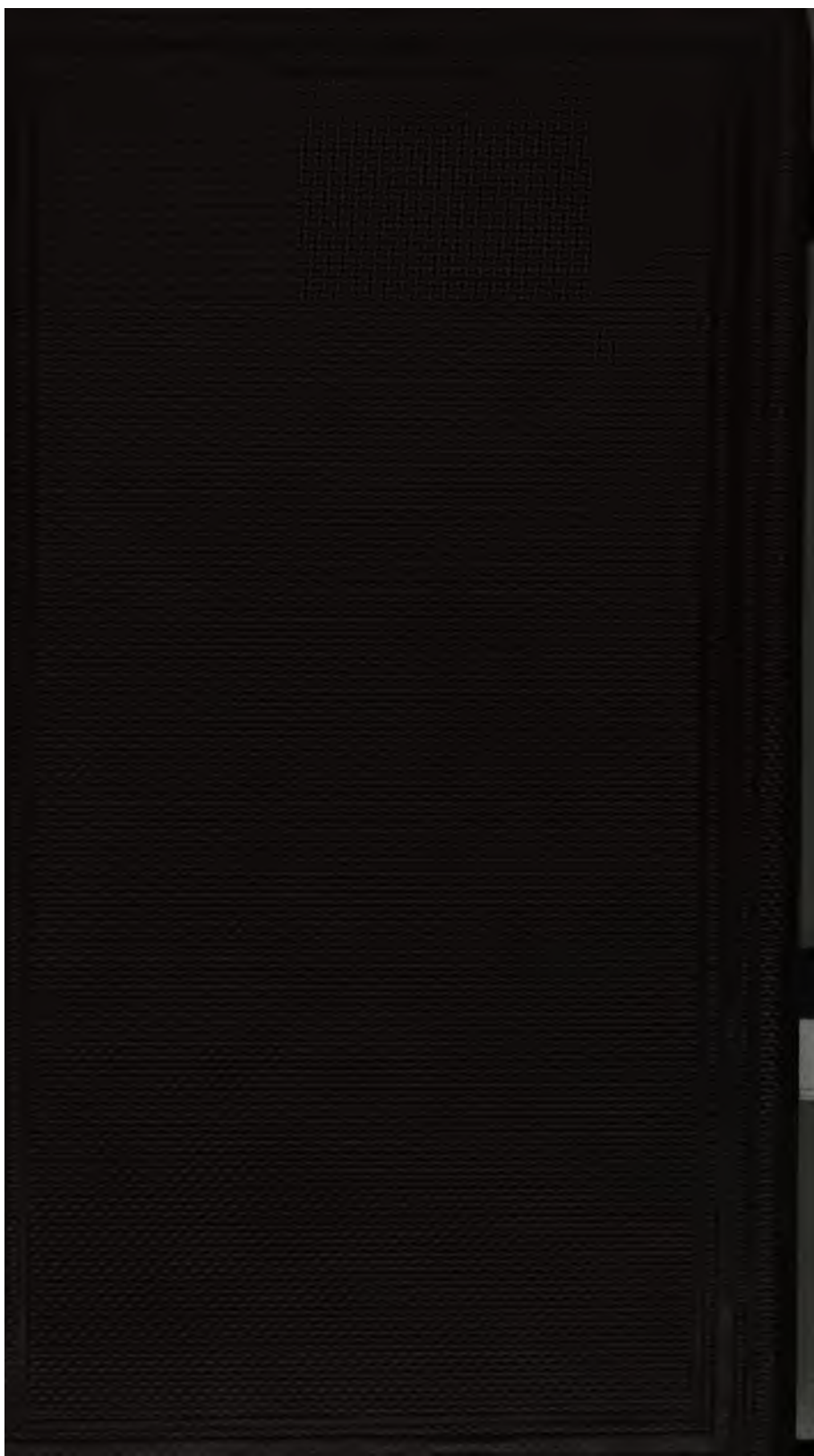
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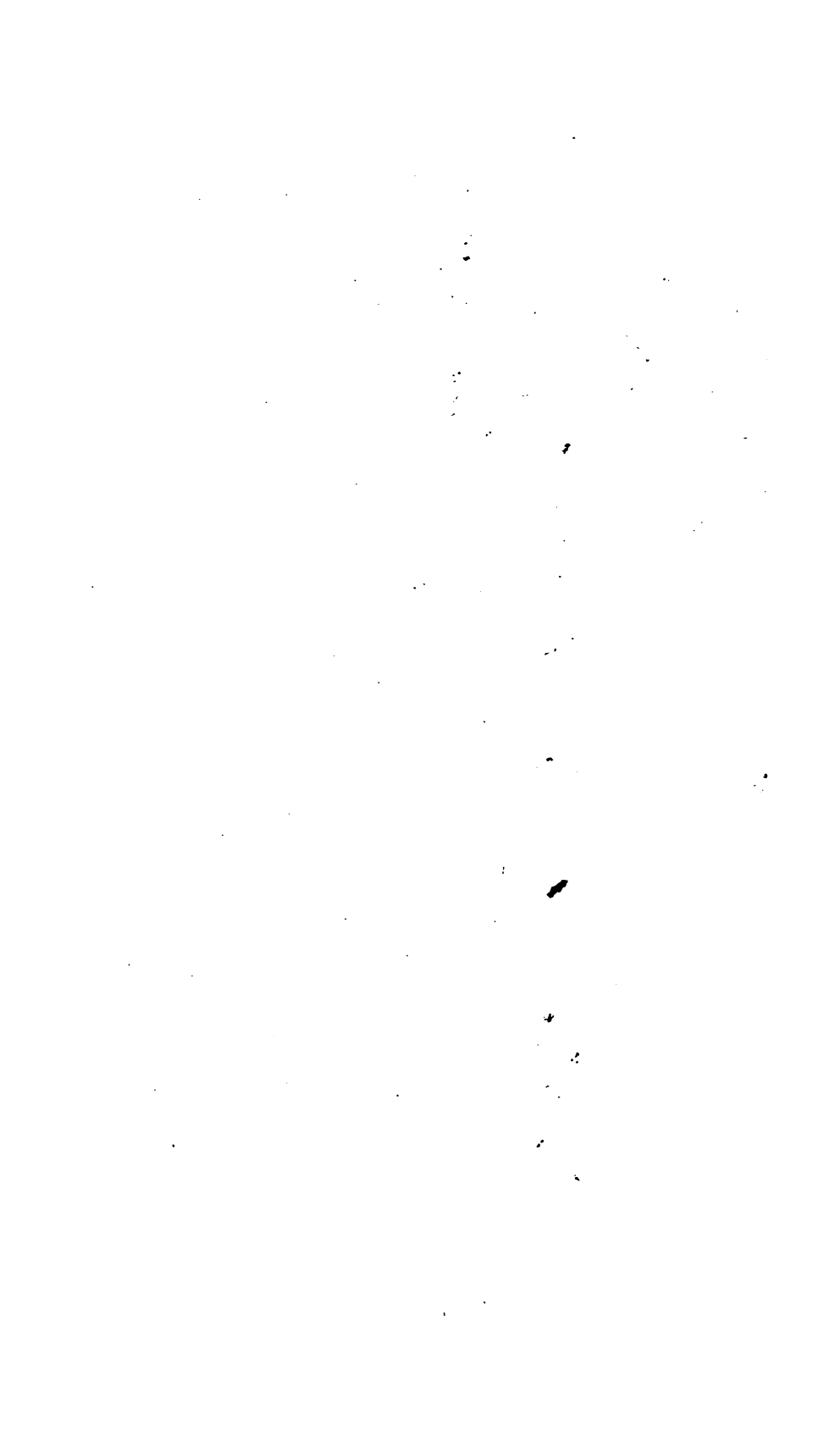
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THE  
LIFE AND REIGN  
OF  
DAVID KING OF ISRAEL.



BY  
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LITERATURE, ETC., ETC.

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## PREFACE.

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THE Life and Reign of David is a subject so full of interest and importance, that it has had a large share of attention from biblical critics, commentators, and historians. Yet, notwithstanding the numerous articles and able works which have been devoted to it, there has been, as far as the observation of the author has extended, one important aspect of the case left almost untouched; and thus at least one great *desideratum* remains unsupplied.

The Life and Reign of David was the most influential portion of Hebrew history; for it was the grand epoch which gave to the elect people of God the first important movement toward the development of their national resources, and which introduced into their polity great elements of social and religious progress. Besides all this, there were then brought into view such glorious revelations of Divine truth respecting the future of God's Israel, as made that period not only the centre-point of Old-Testament history, but also, in no unimportant sense, a key to the great scheme of human redemption. The reign of David also exhibited the divinely appointed theocracy of Hebrew government in its nearest approach to purity and practical perfection. And

under these influences there was raised up by David a kingdom which was then, and has ever since continued to be, a standing type and precursor of the kingdom of Messiah, who is on this account emphatically called "the Son of David," and whose reign is accordingly spoken of as "the throne of David," and "the kingdom of David."

These topics have been doubtless referred to by previous writers, but in a manner so partial and unconnected as to leave the mind of the author deeply impressed with the religious importance of contributing to some extent toward supplying the deficiency; and this he has endeavoured to do in the present volume. In performing this task his aim has been to present a fair and faithful narrative of the life of the son of Jesse, and a truthful account of his reign. At the same time he has given due prominence to the religious element throughout the whole course of the king's career; as, without this, any life of David must appear only as an account of a lifeless, spiritless skeleton. To this end many of his Psalms have been placed in juxta-position with the events which called them forth; and special importance is attached to the introduction of a new and most influential agency—"the service of song"—into public worship, while the nature of the worship which obtained after this change had been effected has been carefully considered. The religious doctrines taught and received at this time, are also briefly stated; and the peculiar relation of David's kingdom to the sovereign rule of Jehovah is distinctly recognised. And, lastly, the numerous prophecies which speak of David and his kingdom in relation to the Messiah have been fully examined and explained.



PREFACE.

v

Although, so far as the author is aware, there is not a sentence in the volume of a controversial character, nor one calculated to wound the feelings of any believer in revelation; yet he is greatly mistaken if a calm, common-sense consideration of the course of biblical study here placed before the reader, is not calculated to cast important light on several great questions which are being canvassed at the present time, and to dispel many pernicious errors and unsound notions, which, unfortunately, exercise a malign influence on many minds.

The volume has been prepared amid many and serious interruptions, and when, during a part of the time at least, the author suffered from ill health; but it has been prepared and published under an earnest desire to promote a knowledge of biblical truth, and the experience of apostolical Christianity; and to these objects the work is sincerely and fervently devoted.

TREVU HOUSE, CAMBORNE,  
*November 7th, 1867.*



# CONTENTS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS STATE OF THE HEBREW NATION PRIOR TO THE ACCESSION OF DAVID.

	PAGE
The origin of the Hebrews - - - - -	1
The r covenant relation to God - - - - -	3
Canaan but partially subdued - - - - -	5
The Book of Judges—its revelations - - - - -	7
Reformation introduced by Samuel - - - - -	10
The Hebrews desire a king - - - - -	13
The reign of Saul - - - - -	15
The results of his reign - - - - -	17

## CHAPTER II.

### THE YOUTHFUL LIFE AND CHARACTER OF DAVID.

His parentage and family relationship - - - - -	19
His employment as a shepherd - - - - -	22
His early piety and poetry - - - - -	24
David as a musician - - - - -	26
Anointed by Samuel - - - - -	28
Probable results - - - - -	29

## CHAPTER III.

### DAVID'S EARLY PUBLIC LIFE.

Devoted to the study of the Divine law - - - - -	31
Connected order of events - - - - -	32
He visits the army, and hears Goliath's defiance - - - - -	34
Fights and kills the giant - - - - -	36
His song of praise on the occasion - - - - -	40
Great victory over the Philistines - - - - -	42
The salutation of the women offends Saul - - - - -	43

## CHAPTER IV.

FROM DAVID'S RETURN TO COURT TO THE TIME OF HIS SEEKING  
REFUGE IN THE CAVE OF ADULLAM.

	PAGE
The mental malady of Saul - - - - -	45
David employed as a minstrel - - - - -	47
Saul's jealousy of David, its consequences - - - - -	49
Songs of prayer and thanksgiving - - - - -	52
David escapes and seeks refuge with Samuel - - - - -	56
Jonathan interposes to save his friend - - - - -	58
David compelled to seek refuge in Gath - - - - -	59
His danger, poetic utterances, and flight to Adullam - - - - -	61

## CHAPTER V.

## FROM DAVID'S RETIREMENT TO ADULLAM TO THE DEATH OF SAUL.

David's family acquainted with the place of his concealment, and numbers flock to him - - - - -	67
His Psalm of complaint and supplication - - - - -	69
The slaughter at Nob, and Psalm on the occasion - - - - -	70
Jesse and his wife come to David, who takes them to the king of Moab - - - - -	76
David nobly refuses to drink the water from Bethlehem - - - - -	77
He saves Keilah, but is obliged to flee from the city - - - - -	79
Psalm written on the occasion - - - - -	79
David's last interview with Jonathan - - - - -	82
Ziphites inform Saul of David's retreat - - - - -	83
His consequent danger and remarkable Psalms - - - - -	84
Rumours of a Philistine invasion enable him to escape - - - - -	89
David cuts off Saul's skirt: his Psalms - - - - -	90
His anger against Nabal appeased by Abigail - - - - -	93
David again has Saul in his power, but saves him - - - - -	94
He again seeks refuge in Gath, and resides at Ziklag - - - - -	98
Ziklag destroyed by Amalekites - - - - -	98
The spoilers pursued, overtaken, and defeated: the captives recovered, and immense booty taken - - - - -	99
Defeat and death of Saul and of his sons - - - - -	101
David's lamentation and elegy on the occasion - - - - -	103

## CHAPTER VI.

## FROM DAVID'S RETURN TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL TO HIS ESTABLISHMENT IN JERUSALEM.

David resolves to introduce the bow into the Hebrew army - - - - -	105
He returns with his troop to Hebron, and is made king of Judah - - - - -	106
Abner makes Ishbosheth king of Israel - - - - -	107
Battle of Gibeon: death of Asahel - - - - -	109
David demands his wife from Ishbosheth - - - - -	110
Abner negotiating with David is assassinated by Joab - - - - -	111
Ishbosheth assassinated, and David King of all Israel - - - - -	114
His Psalms on the occasion - - - - -	115

CONTENTS.

ix

	PAGE
Zion taken from the Jebusites, and Jerusalem made the Hebrew capital	120

CHAPTER VII.

FROM THE OCCUPATION OF JERUSALEM TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARK ON MOUNT ZION.

War with the Philistines	123
They are defeated and subdued	124
Successive removals of the Ark of the Covenant	125
David builds a tabernacle for it on Mount Zion	129
Psalm composed in contemplation of its removal	130
Great preparations for this event : the death of Uzzah	134
The attempt renewed : further Psalms	135
The Ark taken to the tabernacle of Zion	139
Joyous religious services on the occasion	139

CHAPTER VIII.

HEBREW WORSHIP AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARK AT ZION, AND THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL WHICH FOLLOWED.

The Mosaic tabernacle at this time at Gibeon	141
The worship established in the tabernacle on Zion	142
There was a special revelation of the Divine presence	143
David's Psalm for the opening service	146
This religious service confided to Levites	148
Their ministrations there	149
The second part of this religious worship	150
David delivered discourses there	153
The third part—the Service of Song	155
This marked a new era in public worship	156
Moral and religious character of the worshippers	157
Called together by sound of trumpets	159
Mosaic service and sacrifices performed at Gibeon	159
Religious doctrines taught in the tabernacle on Zion	165
Extensive religious results of this worship	174

CHAPTER IX.

FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARK ON MOUNT ZION TO THE BEGINNING OF DAVID'S GENERAL WAR.

David projects the erection of a palace	176
Is assisted by the king of Tyre	178
Military power of the Hebrews at the accession of David	181
Organization of the government	183
David proposing to erect a temple, is forbidden	184
Wonderful prophecy received by him then	186
The information it gave respecting Messiah's kingdom	194
Military combination against David	197

CHAPTER X.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF DAVID'S GENERAL WAR TO HIS RUPTURE  
WITH THE AMMONITES.

	PAGE
The promise of God to Abraham made the subjugation of the nations within the prescribed territory a religious duty	199
War with the Philistines : their subjugation - - -	200
War with Moab and conquest of the country - - -	201
Syria subdued, and a garrison placed in Damascus - - -	203
David's triumphant return : his Psalms of praise - - -	205
Edomites subdued - - - - -	208
New coalition against David in the east - - - - -	208
Revolt of the Edomites, and their union with Syria - - -	213
The confederate armies defeated - - - - -	213
Garrisons placed in the cities of Edom - - - - -	214
Psalms of thanksgiving - - - - -	215
David patronizes Mephibosheth - - - - -	217
Insolent behaviour of the King of Ammon - - - - -	218

CHAPTER XI.

THE WAR WITH THE AMMONITES, AND THE EVENTS WHICH  
THEN TRANSPIRED.

Having insulted David, Nahash forms a union with Syria	219
A Hebrew army under Joab defeats the allied forces - - -	221
Nahash forms an alliance with Syrians of the East - - -	222
David in person defeats them : his Psalms - - - - -	223
He carries his polygamy to an unlawful extent - - - - -	226
Joab sent to invest Rabbah, the capital of Ammon - - -	227
David's sin with Bathsheba - - - - -	227
He endeavours in vain to deceive Uriah - - - - -	228
He then plots his death, and secures his object - - - -	229
Nathan's apologue brings conviction to the king - - - -	230
The terrible punishment threatened - - - - -	231
The king's penitence, and penitential Psalm - - - - -	233
Was David afflicted with a bodily disease ? - - - - -	235
Death of the king's infant child - - - - -	237
David's deep sorrow, and penitential Psalms - - - - -	239
He obtains pardon, and rejoices in God - - - - -	242
Psalms of thanksgiving - - - - -	243
The Ammonites subdued, and Rabbah taken - - - - -	249
The king returns in triumph, laden with spoil : his Psalms	252

CHAPTER XII.

TO THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM.

The birth of Solomon - - - - -	257
The incest of Amnon - - - - -	259
He is assassinated by order of Absalom - - - - -	260
Absalom takes refuge in Geshur three years - - - - -	261
Is allowed to return, but not received at court for two years	262
He is at length forgiven, and received by the king - - -	262

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM.

	PAGE
Absalom might think himself hardly used - - -	263
He assumes unusual state and splendour - - -	264
And insinuates himself into popular favour - - -	265
Under a false pretence, he repairs to Hebron - - -	266
Where he is proclaimed king, and followed by great numbers of the people - - -	267
On hearing this, the king seeks safety by flight - - -	268
He refuses to allow the ark to be taken with him - - -	269
Hearing of Ahithophel's treason, he expresses himself in a Psalm - - -	271
He sends back Hushai, to counteract Ahithophel - - -	273
The king rudely assailed by Shimei - - -	274
Absalom's scandalous conduct, on the advice of Ahithophel -	276
His further counsel counteracted by Hushai - - -	278
David reaches the Jordan : his Psalms - - -	279
He reaches Mahanaim - - -	285
Here he finds powerful friends : his Psalms - - -	286
The rebel army approach Mahanaim : the royal troops march to meet them - - -	290
David's Psalms during the conflict - - -	291
A particular account of the battle - - -	292
The death of Absalom, and defeat of his army - - -	294
Intense sorrow of the king for his son - - -	296
Psalms of thanksgiving - - -	297

## CHAPTER XIV.

FROM THE TERMINATION OF THE REBELLION, TO THE END  
OF DAVID'S WARS.

David contemplates removing Joab from the command of the army - - -	300
By the influence of Amasa, the king is invited to return -	301
His Psalm on the occasion - - -	301
Quarrel between the men of Judah and of Ephraim - - -	304
Revolt of Sheba, followed by the men of Israel - - -	305
David reaches Jerusalem, and commands Amasa to collect troops, and suppress the revolt - - -	305
Amasa assassinated by Joab - - -	306
Joab pursues Sheba, who is slain at Abel - - -	306
Psalms celebrating the king's return - - -	307
Causes of division and disaffection among the Hebrews -	310
The famine on account of the Gibeonites - - -	314
The evil expiated, the famine ceases - - -	317
Psalms celebrating the return of plenty - - -	318
The Philistines assert their independence - - -	322
But after several battles are quite subdued - - -	323
Psalm celebrating the victories, and return of peace - -	325

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE NUMBERING OF THE PEOPLE, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

	PAGE
Doubt as to the nature of the sin in this case - - -	329
Probable solution of the difficulty - - - - -	330
The act a sin against the Theocracy - - - - -	333
David's choice of punishment - - - - -	334
Progress of the pestilence arrested - - - - -	335
An altar built on the threshing-floor of Ornan - - -	336
The sacrifice consumed by fire from heaven - - -	337
This place appointed as the seat of national worship -	337
The plague ceases : Psalms of thanksgiving - - -	340

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE CLOSING PERIOD OF DAVID'S REIGN.

David bends his last energies to provision for the temple -	342
Solomon chosen to succeed his father - - - - -	343
Adonijah prepares to assume the sovereignty - - -	344
David commands Solomon to be anointed king - - -	345
Adonijah and his friends disperse in dismay - - -	347
The priests and Levites meet the king - - - - -	348
David's Song of Praise - - - - -	349
David convenes the principal officers of the kingdom -	351
The king's address to the assembly - - - - -	352
His solemn charge to Solomon - - - - -	353
The munificent contributions toward the erection of the temple -	355
The meeting followed by a sacrificial feast - - -	357
David retires, and composes Psalm lxxii. - - - -	358
His last advices to Solomon considered - - - - -	362

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL CHARACTER OF DAVID, AND  
THE RESULTS OF HIS REIGN.

The last words of David - - - - -	365
Difficulties of this portion of Scripture - - - - -	366
Personal lineage and character of the king - - - -	367
The "man who was raised up on high" - - - - -	367
The "anointed of the God of Jacob" - - - - -	368
The "sweet Psalmist of Israel" - - - - -	370
The second part of the poem - - - - -	372
The concluding portion - - - - -	378
The character of David : his bravery - - - - -	385
A statesman - - - - -	386
A man of strong family affection - - - - -	387
Deeply and devotedly pious - - - - -	387
Held a prominent position in the scheme of redemption -	388
One of the greatest and most eminent of men - - -	389



HISTORY OF THE LIFE AND REIGN  
OF  
DAVID, KING OF ISRAEL.

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CHAPTER I.

THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS STATE OF THE  
HEBREW TRIBES, PRIOR TO THE ACCESSION OF DAVID.

THE accession of David to the throne of Israel is the most important event in the history of the Jewish nation. His reign raised his country from a state of servitude and obscurity to great wealth, distinction, and power. And this appears to have resulted mainly from the vigour and energy of his mind, his daring courage, and the maturity of judgment which he evinced even in early life. But in order that we should comprehend the real greatness of his character, the importance of his conquests, and the happy results of his administration, it is necessary that we should have a tolerably complete acquaintance with the social state of the people previous to his accession, should know something of the manner of their government under the judges, and should have a correct idea of their religious condition.

The state of the Hebrews at this time, and the

circumstances which led to the elevation of David, cannot, however, be clearly set forth without a reference to their early history and their peculiar civil and religious institutions.

Unlike that of every other ancient people, the progress of the Israelites from a family to a nation, is not shrouded in myth, legend, and fable, but is clearly set forth in the sacred record, if not with all the fulness of detail that could be wished, yet in a connected form, and with undoubted truthfulness.

The personal history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as given in the Book of Genesis, shows the origin of the Hebrews as a people. The rapid multiplication of their descendants in Egypt, notwithstanding the rigorous service they were compelled to perform, exhibits their development; and the miraculous exodus from that house of bondage, presents them to our view as an independent people. By the independence of the Hebrews, however, must be understood their freedom from the authority or domination of any other nation or temporal power. Their dependence upon God was absolute and unlimited. And this, not merely in the sense in which all the human family depend on the Author and Preserver of their being. By Divine intention and dominant purpose they were placed, immediately after their deliverance from Egypt, in a desert wilderness, without the means of subsistence, or the possibility of procuring it by any labours or efforts of which they were capable; and thus their very existence was made to depend on the daily and continual interpositions of God on their behalf. But, even in those circumstances, all their wants were miraculously supplied. Manna was given them from heaven; water issued from the rock; their way was directed and their

camp was defended by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire.

These temporal provisions, and this Divine guidance and protection, although given as the necessity for them arose, were continued as the result of the covenant relation which subsisted between God and this people. In one of the most glorious revelations of the Divine majesty ever vouchsafed to mortals, the Lord said unto them by Moses: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will hear My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." And to this appeal the people responded. "Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord." (Exod. *xiii.* 3-8.)

This covenant relation was consummated by extensive legislation and actual government. The religion of the Hebrews hitherto had been purely patriarchal. The moral precepts, religious worship, and social usages which had obtained from the beginning were retained among them, modified by circumstances, and adapted to the state of the people under the direction of the heads of tribes and families. On this occasion, God gave them a complete ecclesiastical system and plan of government. The ten moral precepts found in the Decalogue formed the foundation of this code; and with these were revealed an elaborate scheme of worship, a splendid ritual, and a large arrangement for a

constantly-recurring series of sacrificial offerings; forming together a most extensive and complete religious economy. This system of religion contained within itself the political constitution and civil laws under which the Hebrew people were to live, and by which their whole course of public and private life was to be regulated. While in other kingdoms and communities civil and political laws rested on other grounds, and were enforced by an authority altogether different from those of a religious character, with the Hebrews it was exactly the reverse. In their case, God was their Sovereign and Lawgiver, as well as the object of their worship. The civil and religious economy of the Hebrews was, in fact, one and the same.

This form of government was purely theocratic, not only in theory, but in practice and reality. The inner sanctuary in the tabernacle—the Holy of Holies, was the seat and throne of the Divine Majesty. There, the bright, luminous cloud, resting on the wings of the cherubim, was a visible representation of the presence of God. From thence He spake in an audible voice to Moses and the High Priest. Here He was to be consulted, and His commands received. This was His ordinance given to the lawgiver of Israel: "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony." (Exod. xxv. 22.) Here, as ministers wait upon their sovereign, and receive his commands, did Moses and Aaron wait upon God, and learn His will, and how to execute His behests in the government of the people.

In this manner the Hebrews were directed and governed during the forty years of their sojourn in the wilderness. On more than one occasion the great

body of the congregation rebelled against the Lord, and provoked His righteous anger; and, after suffering signal chastisement, were pardoned at the intercession of Moses. At other times, individuals, or companies of the people, disobeyed His commands, and resisted His will; they were consequently cut off by miraculous displays of Divine power. Yet, notwithstanding all these alternations of fidelity and disobedience, the host of Israel was led to the borders of Canaan, the country to the east of the Jordan was subdued, the river was crossed, the whole territory from Jordan to the sea taken possession of, and divided between the tribes by lot. But although, according to the promises which God had given to their fathers, the arms of Israel were successful, so far as to enable them to subdue all the kings of the country, and to take possession of it, they did not continue the war so as to exterminate the Canaanites, as they had been commanded to do. Instead of acting as a united army until this was effected, they appear after the death of Joshua to have allowed each tribe to depend on its own resources. In consequence of this remissness, there were districts, hills, and strongholds still held by the former inhabitants throughout the country; the families to whom these places had been assigned by lot being unable to expel them.

These unsubdued parts of the country, not only became so many causes of national and political weakness, but they were soon found to occasion great and serious evils of a religious character. The cessation of war was soon followed by the beginning of an intercourse, more or less intimate, between the Hebrews and the remaining heathen inhabitants of these places; and this intercourse, in many instances, led the neighbouring Israelites into idolatry. This was the highest and

foulest crime which a Hebrew could commit, inasmuch as it was a direct renunciation of his covenant relation to the Lord—an entire rejection of Jehovah as his King and his God. These transgressions, therefore, were usually followed by severe punishment. Frequently the heathen tribes occupying contiguous districts were permitted to overrun a portion of the Hebrew territory, to reduce the inhabitants to subjection, and to rule over them with great harshness and cruelty. In other instances the remains of the original inhabitants became sufficiently powerful to oppress their Hebrew neighbours, and to inflict on them severe suffering and privation. These oppressions and their painful consequences, generally led the people to penitence and prayer; and the Lord from time to time raised up heroic men, who, guided and sustained by Divine Providence, in numerous instances wrought out deliverance for their people from the power of their oppressors.

The Book of Judges contains an account of these sinful relapses, and of the several gracious interventions of God on behalf of His people; but there is reason to fear that this part of Holy Scripture has been greatly and generally misunderstood. The Book of Judges does not give a history of the Israelites in the period to which it refers. It is not, in its detail of historical facts, consecutive, chronological, or complete. The object of the inspired author appears to have been, to place on record a brief account of the several religious defections of the people, their consequent punishment, and successive deliverances. But these accounts should not be regarded as exhibiting the general condition of the Hebrew people from the death of Joshua to the time of Samuel.

The subjection of the Israelites, and the oppressions

to which they were exposed, were almost in every case local, affecting only some particular tribe, or one or more tribes, and not the whole nation, which was seldom, if ever, under the yoke at the same time. Nor did these oppressions extend to the whole of this period. From the final division of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel to the accession of Saul, there elapsed a period of about four hundred and eighty-six years, while the aggregate amount of all the periods of subjection is only one hundred and thirty-one years ; so that there were three hundred and fifty-five years, during the far greater part of which, the Hebrews were free from foreign domination, and living in comparative peace and prosperity.

Then the important fact must be distinctly recognised, that the worship of God in the Tabernacle, according to the Mosaic ritual, was continued throughout this period ; and justice was administered, and public order maintained, by officers appointed in succession to the elders, who were charged with this duty by Moses ; and that these agencies were frequently supplemented by extraordinary judges. These judges were persons raised by God for special purposes ; generally to deliver the people from the power of their oppressors, and to restore the people from idolatry to the worship of God, and to promote the general well-being of the nation, and the interests of spiritual religion.

These united agencies were, to a considerable extent, sufficient to maintain public order, to perpetuate the worship of Jehovah, and a general observance of Mosaic law ; but it is an undoubted fact, that great portions of the people repeatedly and extensively relapsed into idolatry. This transgression among the Hebrews, as we have already seen, assumed a very different cha-

ractor from that which it had, when committed by any other people. Idolatry must always be regarded as an act of consummate folly, and of foul iniquity, and has always led to great national degeneracy and extensive vice; but these fatal results were more intensely developed when it prevailed among the Hebrews, than with any other people. With them, it was treason against the sovereign, as it was sin against God, and brought with it a terrible amount of debasement and degeneracy of character. This was more particularly evinced in their political and martial operations. The entire influence of the Hebrew faith and worship was to imbue the public mind with unbounded confidence in God. This was most especially the case in their wars with idolatrous nations. The Lord had so often, and so marvellously, interposed on their behalf, He had so fully pledged Himself to fight for them, and to protect them, while they continued faithful to His covenant, that a Hebrew, reared up under these influences, was, while faithful to God, by the force of circumstances, a hero. And for the same reason, when he had apostatized into idolatry, and was not only deprived of this confidence, but felt that God had become the adversary of His people and His cause, he became a coward, and was decidedly inferior to men who had been always accustomed to rely on their own energy and prowess.

Idolatry was always accompanied by a complication of vices and brutalizing practices, which had a most fatal effect on public manners and morals; and it is only by the prevalence of such an evil influence extensively, that we can account for such atrocities as those perpetrated at Gibeah by the Benjaminites,—the mode of appeal to which the injured Levite had recourse, to rouse Israel to avenge his wrong,—and the foul licen-



tious practices of the sons of Eli. It must be admitted that, where such flagrant vices and brutality could take place publicly, there could have been little religious influence, and still less regard for morals or decency.

It seems therefore evident that, throughout this period, and even to the time of Samuel, (1 Sam. vii. 3, 4,) there was not only a strong tendency in the Hebrew mind to fall into idolatrous practices, but many of them were actual worshippers of the most impure heathen deities. This fact is a sufficient proof that the debasing practices and flagrant vices inseparably connected with this idolatry, to the same extent, obtained in Israel. It seems therefore highly probable, that although there were individuals who, like Hannah and Samuel, entered into the spirit of their dispensation and realized spiritual intercourse with God, the great majority of the Hebrew people who had not fallen into idolatry were merely formal adherents to the Mosaic economy. From the words used by Eli to Hannah, it appears not to have been a very unusual thing for women to come to the tabernacle worship in a state of intoxication; and the address of the man of God to this high priest, sufficiently indicates that religion was polluted at the fountain-head; for the father, as well as his sons, is clearly denounced as having in heart departed from God. (1 Sam. ii. 27-33.)

An evident result of the low state of religion among the people of Israel, was the disunion and jealousy of the different tribes. The condition of the Hebrews, in this respect, was such as to test with great exactitude the working of the theocracy. Under its operation, Jehovah as their King was the centre of their religious and political union; just as He was revered and obeyed, the people were a united and compact nation, bound

together by a common faith and identity of interest ; but when numerous sections became rebellious and idolatrous, and others gave merely a nominal adhesion to their national faith, they became separate, and sometimes rival, communities, as they evidently were, to a great extent, in the time of Eli.

The various measures of reform and improvement inaugurated by Samuel, and especially his revival and extension of the prophetic institute, had a very healthy influence on the public mind. Jehovah was, in consequence, more generally recognised ; and His worship, purified and extended, rendered religion an agent of great potency in the moral and social improvement of the people. These means undoubtedly led to their renunciation of idolatry on the earnest exhortation of Samuel, when gathered together in the solemn assembly at Mizpeh. On this memorable occasion, the Philistines seem to have taken this religious gathering for a warlike movement, and marched an army to crush any attempt of the kind ; but the Hebrews, terror-stricken at the appearance of their enemies, entreated Samuel to call upon God on their behalf ; and it was not until the Lord had routed the heathen host by a terrible thunder-storm, that the Hebrews had spirit enough to pursue and cut down their affrighted foes in their rapid flight. But it is observable, that, although this discomfiture of the Philistine army was so complete, we hear of no acts of heroism on the part of the Hebrews ; no mention is made of any notable zeal, patriotism, or martial prowess ; the Divine interposition alone gave them the victory. Their previous idolatry had destroyed their spirit.

This could not have been the case if the people had been previously faithful to their covenant relation to Jehovah. Had their males, as required by the Mosaic

law, generally appeared to worship and to offer sacrifice in the tabernacle of the Lord; had the people throughout the length and breadth of the land made the Divine law the rule of their life, they would not only have been a united people, but a people standing in such a relation to God as would have rendered them invincible to all the aggressions of their foes, however numerous or powerful. We see this truth exemplified in the case before us. No sooner had the general assembly of Israel renounced Baalim and Ashtaroth, than the Lord interposed on their behalf, and, without any military prowess on their part, scattered their enemies as chaff before the wind.

The conclusion from the whole history, therefore, is that the theocracy, as it existed in the Divine purpose, had failed. For although the Lord was not only faithful to His covenant, but abundant in long-suffering and compassion towards Israel, they, on the other hand, "after the death" of Joshua, and of the elders that "outlived Joshua," were never, for any long period, sufficiently faithful and obedient to insure that unity and Divine protection which was essential to constitute a nation of which the Lord was the King.

This fact illustrates and explains the true cause and character of the demand which the people made to Samuel to have a king appointed over them. Although the unworthy conduct of the sons of the prophet was the immediate cause of this application, it is clear from the narrative that the want felt by the nation, arising from its religious state, was the true ground on which the demand rested.

The religious condition of the Hebrews at this time, was not such as to give them that faith in the protection and interposition of God on their behalf which their covenant relation to Him warranted. Without

a more spiritual devotion to His will, and a more perfect obedience to His law, they could not have that confidence in Divine guidance and blessing which was necessary to give general union and national security. Foolish and wicked as it was for them to settle down into such an unworthy condition, yet, having done so, it was wiser for them to seek for a recognised head and ruler, than to sink still lower into confirmed disunion and anarchy. By this step, however, as far as the people of Israel were concerned, they to a serious extent abrogated their high destiny as the people of God, and sank down to the level of other nations.

The language employed by the Lord to Samuel, when the people required him to appoint a king over them, fully accords with this view of the case. He said, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." (1 Sam. viii. 7.) It is then distinctly stated, that idolatry was the great cause of the alienation of the people from God. For the Lord continued to say in His command to the prophet, "According to all the works that they have done since the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken Me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee." (viii. 8.) The prevalence of idolatry amounted to a rejection of God. He, therefore, granted their request by giving them a king; but this gift, although a means of political and martial strength, was at the same time the proof of great religious declension, and as such was a national calamity.

The request of the Hebrews having been granted, Saul, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, was

made the first king of Israel. He was selected by Divine appointment, and anointed by Samuel. He was afterwards chosen by the sacred lot in a solemn assembly of the people at Mizpeh, and was received with universal acclamation by the multitude as their sovereign. No inauguration to the throne could be more formal, satisfactory, or complete.

The demand of the men of Israel for a king was, on their part, a rejection of Jehovah, and a breach of their covenant relation to Him. Had the king been rightly disposed, he might, to a great extent, have warded off the practical effect of this act of apostasy. Saul was well acquainted with the relation which his people held to the Almighty. He must have known of His numerous and wonderful interpositions on their behalf; and nothing could be more evident than that it was his wisdom, as it was his duty, to place himself through the appointed means in communication with heaven; and to guide and govern Israel under the direction of God, and as His vicegerent.

Unhappily for himself and for his people, Saul did not uniformly adopt this course. Not that he was guilty of any overt act of apostasy. He never tolerated any worship but that of Jehovah, and always professed to recognise His Divine authority; and, in some instances, enforced the Mosaic laws with great zeal and severity. But in his kingly rule, in many important cases, he acted as an independent sovereign, without reference to the Divine will; while, in other instances, he pursued a course in direct opposition to the declared will of God; so that he miserably failed in his duty as a ruler subject to Jehovah over the elect nation.

Although thus defective in his religious obedi-

ence, Saul was undoubtedly one of the world's great men. Few persons raised suddenly from a private condition to royal dignity would have conducted themselves with the judgment and moderation manifested in his conduct. No state or splendour was immediately assumed, and he devoted himself earnestly to the duties of his high office. A few spirited men, moved by the solemn character of his appointment to the throne, attached themselves to him; and to these he added others, as opportunity offered. He then exerted himself to provide them with arms; and was successful in several wars of considerable magnitude. He not only defeated the Ammonites and Philistines, the ancient enemies of Israel, but also fought with success against the Amalekites, Moabites, and other neighbouring and powerful tribes.

But these warlike preparations and martial achievements did not absorb the attention and exhaust the energies of the new monarch. He gave careful attention to the internal arrangements of his kingdom; and although at first his sway seems to have been limited to a great extent to his own tribe of Benjamin, yet so effective was his administration, that on his death, although it took place under the most disastrous circumstances, a very large portion of the Hebrew people steadily adhered to his son,—a tolerable proof of his capacity and moderation in the direction of the affairs of the nation; especially so, when taken in connexion with the fact, that we hear of no complaint against his general conduct as a ruler.

Undoubtedly the grand defect in Saul's official character was, as has been already stated, his virtual rejection of the theocratic nature of the Hebrew constitution. Like the best of the Judges, Saul ought to have ruled in subjection to Jehovah. He could have

placed himself in continual and direct communication with the Divine Head of the elected nation, and have carried out His behests in all the acts of his government. He would thus have insured unfailing guidance and efficient support in every emergency. But, on the contrary, Saul, either distrusting the Lord, as he did in the Philistine war, (1 Sam. xiii. 2-15,) when he invaded the priest's office in violation of the law, or by departing from the express command of God, in the exercise of an independent self-will, as in the case of Amalek, (1 Sam. xv.,) altogether overlooked the fact that, although king of Israel, he was a vassal of Jehovah.

The punishment which these acts of disobedience brought on the king completed the ruin of his character. Samuel was commanded by God to announce to him fully and formally the certain transfer of the kingdom to another and a worthier man; and it soon became apparent that this man was David. The high hope of Saul that he would be succeeded by his valiant and noble-minded son Jonathan was therefore completely destroyed, and his proud spirit sank beneath the infliction into a state of complete melancholy, and an irritability bordering on frenzy. The prospect of the elevation to the throne, in his stead, of a young man who at the outset of his career was so unknown as David, so enraged him, that for some years he sought his life with the most violent rancour and perseverance. Living under the influence of these vile passions, the remainder of his life, as might be expected, was wicked and miserable.

The facts already stated convey a tolerably correct impression of the state of the Hebrew people at the close of this reign. From these, it seems evident, that they were better organized and armed for aggression

or defence than they had been since the days of Joshua. The state of subjection to which they had been reduced by the Philistines had deprived them almost entirely of the army and warlike means which they had before possessed; and these were, it is presumed, but scanty and inferior. Thus the reign of Saul must have made a great improvement in the military resources of the country, since the numerous victories obtained over the Philistines and other nations must have resulted in the acquisition of great spoil, a very considerable portion of which would consist of arms and armour. There is also reason to believe that some improvement had taken place in the union of the people. A sovereign rule of forty years, extending to all the tribes, and felt in every part of the country, would be sure, in some measure at least, to have this effect.

There can be no doubt that the social condition of Israel had also made considerable progress during this reign. A settled government and increased union among the people would certainly tend to this result. Nor is there any reason for doubting that the eulogy pronounced on Saul by David was founded in truth: "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel." This language indicates a great progress, not only in the acquisition of the necessaries and comforts of life, but also in respect to elegance and luxury.

We have fewer means of estimating the religious condition of the Israelites at this period. During the half century from the beginning of Samuel's administration to the death of Saul, various powerful and conflicting influences were brought to bear on the religion of the Hebrews. The pious example and



equitable government of Samuel, his revival and extension of the prophetic institute, and, above all, the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit which we are assured rested in rich measure on the services of these prophets, must have largely contributed to the religious improvement of the people. It also appears that throughout this period the services of the Mosaic sanctuary were continued in the prescribed manner, and the precepts of the law enforced. The severe edict of Saul against persons pretending to have intercourse with familiar spirits, would seem to indicate that he was very zealous in the application of the Mosaic code, and, as far as possible, caused all its provisions to be respected and obeyed. All these circumstances would be favourable to the promotion of religion among the people, and would tend to their progress in piety.

On the other hand, however, there were adverse influences brought to bear on the public mind, The brutal ferocity with which this infatuated king persecuted David, and sought his life; the well-known fact that all his resources were employed for a considerable time in an endeavour to cut off a young man who was not only guiltless of any crime, but who had entitled himself to the gratitude of his king and his country by the greatest heroism, must have had a damaging effect on public morals; and this effect would be rendered more intense by the bloody vengeance with which Saul punished all who were but suspected of favouring the young fugitive, as instanced in the case of the priests and inhabitants of Nob. In this particular case, however, it is observable that no Hebrew could be induced to raise his hand against the priests of the Lord, although urged thereto by the personal presence and command of the king.

It is a remarkable fact, that the only instance we have on record of the inner life of religion during the time of Saul, except what is found in the case of David, is in reference to the king himself. When endued with the gift of prophecy he was made the subject of a great moral and spiritual change. It was said of him, "Thou shalt be turned into another man;" and when this was verified, we are told, "God gave him another heart." (1 Sam. x. 6.)

The absence of real heart-felt religion from the people generally, must not however be inferred from the omission of clear and frequent references to it in the brief narrative of Samuel. But for the eminent piety and public character of this prophet we should not have heard of the piety, prayers, and inspiration of Hannah. Had not Boaz been the progenitor of the Messiah it is not likely that we should have had that beautiful picture of the simplicity, piety, and purity of Hebrew life in his time, as given in the Book of Ruth. There can be no doubt but that such instances were continued and multiplied under the rule of Samuel and Saul. Indeed, the universal disgust felt for Samuel's unworthy sons, is a tolerably conclusive proof that a healthy moral and religious character prevailed among the Hebrews of that day; and it seems probable that this improved, rather than diminished, towards the termination of Saul's reign.

## CHAPTER II.

### DAVID'S YOUTHFUL LIFE AND CHARACTER.

DAVID was the youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem, and great grandson of Boaz who married Ruth, the young Moabitish widow. The family had held a prominent position in the tribe of Judah, being the principal landed proprietors in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem.

To what extent Jesse maintained this position and possessed this property, cannot be clearly ascertained. By the Hebrew law of inheritance the landed property of a father at his death was divided into equal portions, one in number more than the number of his sons; the eldest son taking two of these portions, the others one each. The daughters were supposed to be provided for by the father's other property. Boaz was evidently a wealthy man; but as we do not know how many sons he had, nor how many sons were born unto Obed, we have no means of knowing what portion of the property came into the possession of Jesse.

Some expressions used by David in his Psalms have been referred to for the purpose of showing that his family was in a very humble and obscure position; but it is doubtful whether these passages justify the conclusions which have been drawn from them. It is also worthy of remark, that although Jesse is described as occupying a position of some respectability

in Bethlehem, and was able to send three of his sons to the army of Saul, and to support them there, there is no mention made of any property possessed by him, excepting sheep; and these are said to have been but "few."

The youngest son of Jesse received a name indicative of great endearment,—“the beloved,” “the dear one,” or “darling.” Yet, notwithstanding this, it does not seem that he was a particular favourite in the family. It is an undoubted fact that we have, in the case of David, means of knowing his sentiments, of gauging his feelings, and of entering into the most sacred recesses of his thoughts, hopes, and fears, more than is possible in the case of any other Old Testament character. In his numerous Psalms this inspired poet poured forth the convictions, expectations, and emotions of his soul without reserve. These give us a delineation of his inner man, and almost supply a secret history of his life. Yet ample as are these expressions of his feelings, it is remarkable that he never mentions his father but once, and then certainly not in terms which indicate paternal kindness.

“When my father and mother forsake me,  
Then the Lord will take me up.” (Psalm xxvii. 10.)

Eminent commentators maintain that the hypothetical form of the passage ought to be removed; that to bring it into strict accord with the original it should be read:—

“For my father and mother have forsaken me,  
But the Lord will take me up.”\*

Nor does David speak of his mother in those terms

\* Hengstenberg contends for this sense, and maintains that the former is inadmissible.

of warm affection which Solomon so frequently employs when speaking of his maternal parent. His allusions to her, however, indicate that he regarded her as a woman of real piety. In his prayers we find such expressions as the following :—

“ Give Thy strength unto Thy servant,  
And save the son of Thine handmaid.”

(Psalm lxxxvi. 16.)

“ O Lord, truly I am Thy servant,  
I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid.”

(Psalm cxvi. 16.)

It is also worthy of note that while his nephews Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, the sons of his sister Zeruah, are spoken of as his companions and fellow soldiers, we never hear of his brothers in the history of David.\* Whatever was the cause of this, it does not appear to have arisen from his choice. He laments this estrangement, and says :—

“ I am become a stranger unto my brethren,  
And an alien unto my mother's children.”

(Psalm lxix. 8.)

It has been supposed that the want of cordial sympathy between David and his brethren, arose from his being so much younger than they ; but this could only apply to the elder ones. Zeruah his sister was certainly one of the oldest of Jesse's family, for her sons were evidently about the age of David ; so that there

\* We read (1 Chron. xxvii. 18) of Elihu as prince of the tribe of Judah, who was “one of the brethren of David.” And Jerome has preserved an ancient Hebrew tradition which identifies this individual with Eliab, David's elder brother. But as these traditions cannot always be relied on, and the Hebrews used the terms “brother or brethren” in a very loose sense, so as to include cousins or kinsmen, the hypothesis does not seem sufficiently strong to be relied on.

could have been but one sister between David and his next brother : it is not probable, therefore, that there could be such difference between the age of David and that of his next elder brother, as to account for the absence of brotherly affection between the youngest son and all his brethren.

David was the only one of this family who, as far as we are informed, was engaged in any actual employment. He was, for some reason which does not appear in the narrative, singled out to have the charge of his father's sheep ; and when he was required to visit his three elder brothers in Saul's army, neither of his other brethren took his place, and discharged its duties. David "left the sheep with a keeper." (1 Sam. xvii. 20.) Nor does David appear to have been thought of when Samuel, on his important mission, came to the house of Jesse, until the Lord had rejected all the other sons, and Samuel had put the searching inquiry, "Are here all thy children?" All this appears to indicate that, in his youth, David was regarded as of little account in the family of his father.

Young as he was at this time, however, David evinced many interesting and eminent qualities of body and mind. Although of rather low stature, with red or auburn hair, he was very agile, and remarkably strong. (Psalm xviii. 33, 34.) When first he appears in the history, he was, as already mentioned, engaged in the humble position of a shepherd boy. This occupation, although it has been unduly disparaged as suitable only for slaves, frequently called forth the noblest powers of man, and afforded opportunities for the display of daring courage and indomitable prowess. Such was the case with the son of Jesse. Wild beasts not unfrequently assailed the flocks on the hills of

Judea, and committed extensive ravages. On one occasion a lion came and took a lamb from the flock of Jesse, while it was under the care of David. With undaunted courage he assailed the invader, delivered the lamb; and, when the wild beast turned on him, he smote and slew it. At another time, a bear committed a similar aggression with the same result;—the lamb was saved, and the wild beast destroyed.

But while ready to display heroic courage in defence of his charge, as occasion required, other and more congenial pursuits appear to have absorbed most of his mind and attention. Piety, poetry, and music were cultivated by him to an extent which gave a character to his early manhood, and more or less affected his whole future life. His sincere and fervent piety is undoubted. If it were necessary, proofs of this might be collected from his recorded words and actions; but this is not required. Evidence of the most conclusive character has set this question at rest. No higher testimony to the purity and pious character of a young man can be given, than is afforded by the Lord Himself. The prophet Samuel, when the sons of Jesse had passed before him, that he might select from them a king to reign over Israel, by Divine direction, bore express witness to the piety of the young shepherd. Fascinated with the noble and lofty bearing of the eldest son, he said to himself, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. xvi. 6, 7.) It was the state of David's heart which commended him to the Divine acceptance. His humble pious walk, his earnest devotion to the

Divine will, thus Divinely recognised and approved, were long preserved in the traditions of his people, and are thus recorded by the son of Sirach: "In all his ways he praised the Holy One Most High with words of glory; with his whole heart he sang songs, and loved Him that made him." (Ecclus. xlvii. 8.) .

David's poetic powers and sanctified spirit have placed him at the head of all the writers of sacred song in the whole world. We shall have to speak more fully on this subject in the course of our work; and therefore, only observe here, that so fully was his soul imbued with poetic genius, and so ardently did his heart confide in God, and hold communion with Him, that even in his youth he poured forth some of the most sweet and refreshing of his Divine hymns. Although high authorities are divided in opinion on the subject, we have no doubt that the twenty-third is one of the first Psalms written by David, and that it was composed while he kept his father's sheep near Bethlehem. Let us realize, if we can, the young shepherd casting his eyes over his fleecy charge; observing the efficient means employed for their sustenance and safety, then raising his heart in devout reverence to God, recognising the more abundant protection and provision with which he had been favoured; and, under the influence of the grateful love thus inspired, pouring out his heart's emotions to heaven in the following language:—

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul:  
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His  
name's sake.



Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow  
of death,

I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me ;

Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of  
mine enemies :

Thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth  
over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the  
days of my life :

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

(Psalm xxiii.)

Of David's musical studies or acquirements in his youth, we have no information ; we can only infer his early devotion to this elegant and elevating art, from the eminence to which he afterward attained. The rural scenery, peaceful retirement, and agreeable leisure of pastoral life, have in every country prompted the cultivation of sweet musical strains. With a mind so rich in genius, so full of lofty aspirations as that of David, these influences would have overwhelming force ; and there can be little doubt but that, while watching over his father's sheep on the hills of Bethlehem, he poured forth his songs of praise to God, accompanied by the most harmonious sounds which youthful genius and enthusiasm could elicit from his rudely-formed harp. It is well observed by an able writer on the history of music, when speaking of that of the Hebrews, that "if the excellence of the music was conformable to the sublimity of the poetry which it accompanied, there would be no injustice in supposing it to be unspeakably superior to that of every other people." \* We see no reason

\* THE REV. HENRY LISTON.

to doubt this assumption; and if it is just, then, as David must be regarded as the father of Hebrew poetry, in its highest devotional and lyric character, he will evidently be allowed to have taken the lead in the adaptation of Hebrew music to the worship of God. And as in every respect "the boy is the father of the man," so it is not unreasonable to regard him also as the father of the devotional music of his country. Was it the cultivation of those sublime arts of sacred song and sacred music, by a deeply pious and devoted mind, which in a great degree alienated him from his family, and made him a stranger to his household? We can well conceive the power of such influences on a mind so susceptible of lofty emotions, and so fully imbued with hallowed feeling, as was that of David. His brethren appear, from the little we hear of them, to have been "men of the world," with whom the pious youth, who was just developing into the "man after God's own heart" would have little sympathy, and the less pleasure in their fellowship, he being so greatly their junior. Who knows but that the lines of Montgomery apply to the son of Jesse with far greater force than they do to the antediluvian Tubal?—

"The prince of song (in youth unknown)

Retired to commune with his harp alone;  
 For still he nursed it like a secret thought  
 Long-cherish'd and to late perfection wrought;  
 And still with cunning hand and curious ear  
 Enrich'd, ennobled, and enlarged its sphere,  
 Till he encompass'd in that magic round  
 A soul of harmony, a heaven of sound."\*

There is scarcely a page of history more remarkable, or invested with more romantic interest, than that

\* "World before the Flood."

which first presents David to our notice. Samuel, the recognised prophet of God to His people, who had been their judge and ruler for many years, but who at the earnest request of the people, and by the command of the Lord, had some time before anointed Saul king over Israel, was now commanded to go to the house of Jesse of Bethlehem, and to anoint one of his sons to be king instead of Saul, whom the Lord had rejected from reigning over Israel. Samuel, alarmed at this command, said, "How can I go? if Saul hear of it, he will kill me." The prophet was directed to obviate this difficulty, by taking a heifer with him for sacrifice, to call Jesse and his sons with him to participate in the solemn rite, and then to act as he was Divinely directed.

The prophet obeyed the direction; but his approach aroused the inhabitants of the quiet little city; so that the elders went forth to meet Samuel, and saluted him with the inquiry, "Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord." (1 Sam. xvi. 4, 5.) He then requested them to sanctify themselves, and come to the sacrifice. "And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice." It is difficult to understand the precise sense of the narrative from this point. It goes on to describe the presentation of the sons of Jesse to the prophet in succession, beginning at the eldest; but it cannot be conceived that this took place publicly, as might be supposed from a cursory reading of the account. For if Samuel were terrified lest Saul should hear of this action and kill him, he would be certain to avoid giving any publicity to this anointing, at least beyond the family of Jesse. That this was the case appears from an expression afterward used. (Verse 13.)

In this family circle the venerable seer had the sons

of Jesse successively brought before him. It is not said that he informed them of the precise object of the selection he was appointed to make; but as it was to be followed by anointing, it must have been sufficiently apparent that the designation was to some exalted, sacred, or royal dignity, for to these alone was the act of anointing limited. When Eliab, the eldest son of Jesse, was introduced, the prophet, struck with his lofty stature and noble bearing, thought, "Surely this is the Lord's anointed." This judgment, however, was reproved, and he was taught that God looked not at the outward appearance, but at the state of the heart. With the same result the other six sons of Jesse were presented to the prophet, and the fiat of the Divine Mind to the seer was, "The Lord hath not chosen these." Then Samuel asked Jesse, if these were all his children. It was then, and not till then, that David was thought of, and the father said, "There is the youngest, who is keeping the sheep."

It appears that prior to this, the sacrificial ceremony had been completed, and the sacred feast which followed, prepared; but Samuel felt that he must accomplish his mission before he partook of this; so he said to Jesse, "Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down till he come hither." At length David appeared, a ruddy youth, of a beautiful countenance; and immediately the Divine intimation was given to the prophet, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." Samuel obeyed the Divine injunction, and anointed David in the midst of his brethren.

It is not possible for us to form an accurate judgment of the effect which this action had on the family of Jesse. Some authors have supposed that the anointing, notwithstanding the explicit statement of the text, was strictly private. Others, that nothing

was known of its object or importance. But it is certain from the express terms of Scripture, that Jesse and all his sons must have known that an authoritative selection had been made, in which David was preferred to all his brethren; and, as to the object and importance of this selection, if no mention was made of regal dignity, the character of Samuel, and the position he occupied, afforded abundant evidence that he was sent on no trivial or unimportant mission; but, above all, it was apparent to the whole family, that this appointment was made by the direct authority of Jehovah. The prophet made this prominent throughout his communication; and this was quite sufficient to stamp the entire transaction with a character of the highest importance.

It has been urged in support of the opposite views mentioned above, that no allusion is afterward made to this anointing by any of David's family. This, however, is not so evident as may be at first sight supposed. It seems not at all unlikely, that the sharp rebuke of Eliab to David on the field of battle, when he was inquiring about Goliath, arose from some remembrance of this anointing.

But this act of the prophet was not an empty ceremonial. The sacred writer gives the significant statement, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." God, who had called David to an exalted dignity, gave him the aid of His holy Spirit to prepare him for an adequate discharge of its duties. This was the Divine plan of training a young man to be a king. Not by a wide range of instrumentalities, but by the direct influence of the Holy Ghost, David was raised from the position of a shepherd to all the endowments and qualifications necessary to uphold and adorn a throne.

## CHAPTER III.

### DAVID'S EARLY PUBLIC LIFE.

THE solemn act of anointing performed by the venerable prophet, followed as it was by the abiding baptism of the Holy Spirit, must have exercised a mighty influence on the mind of David.

Young, vigorous, and energetic, full of lofty hopes and daring aspirations, David now felt called to a course of action which demanded the exercise of all his powers in all their maturity and perfection. The strivings of the Divine influence on his mind not only drew out his heart after God, but also led him to live in humble resignation to the Divine will; and to devote himself, without reserve, to the service of his country, and the honour of his God. Besides these, there were other influences which operated on the mind of the youthful David. He was thoroughly versed in the law of God. This had been made his chief study. He was familiar with its great truths, and their spiritual import. He was conversant with the miracles by which the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt, guided and fed them in the wilderness, and ultimately established them in Canaan. We do not indulge in speculation, or make any rash statements, in saying this: the Psalms of David are full of allusions to these events. He repeatedly refers to the early history of his people, and always recognises,

reveres, and declares his intense love for the laws of his God.

It is scarcely possible for us to realize the power which this study would exercise, when prosecuted under the circumstances in which David stood, and on such a mind as his. "The Bible which David had was a pictorial Bible. When he read of the destruction of Sodom, he could see the vapour rising up against the mountain wall of Moab from the sulphureous waters where the guilty cities were entombed. When he paused to ponder the solemn transactions of Machpelah, he could see in the distance the very spot where so much sacred dust was gathered; close by his daily haunts a pillar marked the spot where poor Rachel died; in the dark range of the mountain wall, yon peak was the spot from which Moses had taken his view, and Balaam delivered his vision. We have ample proof that scarcely any part of the then existing Scriptures, and scarcely any of the holy characters delineated in them, was without a permanent influence on his character.....By what instrumentality did the Spirit of God achieve this result? Mainly, we believe, through that intense affection for God's word, which would lead him to pore and pray over each narrative, and each life, with the deep conviction that there was a great practical lesson there for him; and with the earnest entreaty that God would give him grace to extract and apply it."\*

Nor would the traditions of the Hebrew heroic age which lived in the memories of the people of his day, be without their influence on the young anointed shepherd. He would think of the heroism of Barak, Gideon, and Jephtha, and feel his soul stirred with a recollection of their patriotism and prowess.

\* BLACKIE'S "David, King of Israel," p. 21.

But there was one hero who lived nearer to his day, and to the place of his dwelling. In the boyhood of David, there were men living who had conversed with Samson, witnessed his heroic deeds, and mourned over his tragic death. From the heights near Bethlehem, he could see the rock Elam, where the Hebrew Hercules bade defiance to the Philistine hosts, and from whence he allowed himself to be led bound into the presence of his enemies, prior to his inflicting on them the defeat of En-hakkore.

Under such influences as these, the mind of David rose to maturity and power. The stirring events of the day would give to all these recollections intense force and effect; for the warlike people who had kept Israel under their oppressive rule in the days of Samson, were, at that time, exerting their utmost power to re-assert their supremacy, and again reduce the Hebrews to that state of bondage from which they had scarcely escaped. The Philistine army had again invaded Israel, and was encamped within the limits of the tribe of Judah. From the heights just to the west of Bethlehem, the camp where the heathen invaders had assembled must have been distinctly visible. The king rallied his forces to repel this aggression, and the three elder sons of Jesse joined his army. Who can doubt but that the youngest son burned with ardent desire to be with them? He was, however, so far gratified as to have occasionally to visit the army for the purpose of inquiring after his brethren, and conveying to them necessary supplies of provisions.\*

\* Every one who has carefully read the narrative in the Scriptures, will find a very serious difficulty in reconciling its apparent contradictions, and giving to the account, as found there, a clear and connected sense. To effect this, two modes have been suggested. Mr. Pilking-



This fact appears to be clearly indicated by the terms of the sacred text:—"David went and returned

ton and Dr. Kennicott propose to omit the whole passage from verse 12 to 31, inclusive, of chap. xvii. of 1 Sam., as an interpolation, and as being without authority. The principal reason for this is the contradiction implied in David's having lived as a minstrel in Saul's court, and having been promoted to be his armour-bearer, as stated before, (v. 19-23,) and yet that now he should appear as a youth, and be unknown to Abner and Saul; and also the absence of those verses from the Vatican copy of the Septuagint. This fact, and the reasons urged in support of Kennicott's conclusion, led me to adopt this view in the "Sacred Annals." Subsequent consideration and research have, however, led me to a different conclusion. The rejection of so large a portion of text from the sacred canon, must be regarded as a very strong measure; and the more so as it necessitates the rejection also of the fiftieth verse of the same chapter, and of all the verses after the fifty-fourth,—a measure only to be justified by absolute necessity.

Bishop Horsley has found that this necessity does not exist; that the transposition of a few verses from one connexion to another will remove all the difficulty, and restore unity and harmony to the narrative. As it seems much more likely that a few verses should have been misplaced, than that three separate passages should have been foisted improperly into the text, this mode has been adopted in the present work. We give the bishop's reasons in his own words. "It appears, indeed, from many circumstances of the story, that David's combat with Goliath was many years prior, in order of time, to Saul's madness, and to David's introduction to him as a musician. 1. David was quite a youth when he engaged Goliath. (1 Sam. xvii. 33-42.) When he was introduced to Saul as a musician, he was of full age. (xvi. 18.) 2. His combat with Goliath was his first appearance in public life, (xvii. 56,) זֶה עָלָם. When he was introduced as a musician, he was a man of established character. (xvi. 18.) 3. His combat with Goliath was his first military exploit. (38, 39.) He was a man of war when he was introduced as a musician. (xvi. 18.) He was unknown both to Saul and Abner at the time when he fought Goliath. He had not, therefore, yet been in the office of Saul's armour-bearer, or resident in any capacity at the court. Now the just conclusion from all these circumstances is, not that these twenty verses are an interpolation, but that the ten last verses of the preceding chapter, which relate to Saul's

from Saul to feed his father's sheep." (1 Sam. xvii. 15.) On the occasion of one of those visits, when sent with provisions for his brethren and a present for their captain, David reached the army just as Goliath had appeared in all his profane arrogance, to defy the army of Israel and their God.

Nothing can be more hopeless than the attempt to portray the feelings of David at this moment. He was undoubtedly a young Hebrew who lived in the very spirit of his dispensation. To his mind, all the interpositions of God on behalf of His people were living facts; to his simple but strong faith, the certainty of Divine protection and interposition on behalf of him who dared to defend Israel and uphold the honour of Israel's God, was as sure as the truthfulness and faithfulness of God Himself; and with these convictions imbuing his whole soul, he stood amazed to see all the host of Israel, even their king and his most mighty warriors, cowering in terror, and retiring in dismay, madness, and David's introduction to the court upon that occasion, are misplaced. The true place for these ten verses seems to be between the ninth and tenth of the eighteenth chapter. Let these ten verses be removed to that place, and this seventeenth chapter be connected immediately with the thirteenth verse of chapter xvi., and the whole disorder and inconsistency, that appears in the narrative in its present arrangement, will be removed."—HORSLEY'S "Biblical Criticism," vol. i., p. 332.

These facts and reasonings have commanded so much respect that Dr. Hales has adopted the proposed plan in his "Analysis of Chronology," and Townshend has incorporated it into his Chronological Arrangement of the Scriptures. I have pleasure here in adding, that this was also the opinion of a learned friend of mine, but recently removed from us, whose perfect knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures was only exceeded by his fervent piety. The Rev. J. W. Etheridge, M.A., Ph. D., &c., told me, shortly before his death, that he believed the difficulty was occasioned by these verses having been accidentally misplaced.

before one colossal specimen of humanity, who had withal offended heaven, and exposed himself to Divine retribution by his pride and profanity.

Roused by these circumstances, he mingled with the soldiers, and talked with them on the subject, until, notwithstanding the stern rebuke of his eldest brother, his words were reported to Saul, and he was introduced to the royal presence. Nothing can more fully exhibit the terror and humiliation to which Saul and his army were reduced by this giant's defiance, than that the words of a strange lad, in the rear of the army, should have led to his being placed in contact with the king.

Brought into the presence of Saul, however, the young shepherd appears to have attained his object. Neither awed by the presence of majesty, nor appalled at the magnitude of the danger to which he was exposing himself, he calmly said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Pleased, but surprised at the cool daring thus displayed, the king replied: "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." This check to the ardour of David brought out the real character of the young hero. He immediately told the king that, while keeping his father's sheep, a lion and a bear came and took a lamb from the flock; he interposed, and delivered the lamb from their power; and that when the wild beasts turned on him, he smote and slew them; adding, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

This calm decision of character, and strong faith in

God, overcame all the scruples of the king, and he said, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." But desirous that the young hero should meet the giant with some prospect of success, Saul supplied him with weapons and armour. David, however, felt encumbered with these appliances, and saying, "I cannot go with these," put them off, and laid them aside. Then, taking his staff, with five smooth stones from the brook in his shepherd's bag, and his sling in his hand, he went forth to meet his gigantic foe. Although there had been fighting between the Hebrews and the Philistines before Goliath made his appearance, when he arrived, the former had retired in dismay; and the proud challenger again repeated his haughty defiance of the Israelites and of their God.

This was only a repetition of what had taken place daily for forty days, until the host of Israel were disheartened and crushed by this long-continued reproach. In what way the acceptance of the giant's challenge was signified to the Philistines, we are not informed; but something of this sort appears to have taken place, for the Philistine champion evidently expected an antagonist on this day. And so it was. For as the metal-clothed mountain of humanity advanced in front of the Philistine army, and poured forth his profane defiance, there was seen emerging from the Hebrew lines a ruddy youth, without arms or armour. No armour-bearer carried a shield before him; quite alone he hastened to meet Goliath. The giant seeing such an antagonist, regarded him with disdain; and said, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" and he cursed David by his gods, and threatened to give his flesh to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field. To which the youthful Hebrew replied: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a

shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."

Here we must pause for a moment to direct attention to the sterling nobility of mind, and real piety, indicated in this address of the young hero. We may read over the speeches of the warriors, as given by Homer, Virgil, or Livy, and search in vain for a similar address. David displays no proud presumption of his own prowess, yet, unarmed as he was, he was full of confidence, certain of victory; but his was the confidence resulting from a strong faith in God. To this faith his unacquaintance with warfare, his lack of defensive armour, the colossal stature, massive coat of mail, and formidable weapons of his foe, were nothing. His faith united him to the Almighty God, and enabled him to realize the certain interposition of Divine power on his behalf. Under the mighty influence of this faith, he could say with unfaltering assurance, "All this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's."

In this confidence David hastened to meet his giant foe; but, in doing so, he neglected no means in his power to insure the victory which he so fully anticipated. Taking a stone from his bag, he placed it in his sling, and slung it with unerring aim at the giant. The stone sank into his forehead, and the ponderous

foe fell prostrate to the earth. David then ran, stood on the body, and drawing the Philistine's sword, cut off his head, and held it up in the view of the terror-stricken heathens; who immediately fled in wild disorder, and were pursued and slaughtered in great numbers by the exulting Hebrews, even to the gates of Gath and Ekron.

Although the sling is now unknown as a weapon of war, it was formerly very extensively used, and was a very formidable offensive instrument. The men of Benjamin, in the early part of Hebrew history, were so very expert in this mode of casting destructive missiles, that they could "sling stones at an hair, and not miss." (Judges xx. 16.) Several allusions to the sling are found in the subsequent wars of the Hebrews; it was also extensively employed among various Gentile nations,\* as numerous classic authors testify.

\* The people of the Balearic Islands threw stones with their slings, with as much violence as if they were shot out of an engine; with these they brake in pieces their enemies' shields, helmets, and all other defensive armour. "They are such exact marksmen, that they never miss their aim. This skill they attain by their habitual practice from their childhood."—DIODORUS SICULUS, lib. v., cap. 1.

Virgil thus records the exploit of Mezentius:—

"Him when he spied from far, the Tuscan king  
Laid by the lance, and took him to the string;  
Thrice whirl'd the thought about his head, and threw  
The heated lead, half melted as it flew.  
It pierced his hollow temples and his brain,  
The youth came tumbling down, and spurn'd the plain."

*Æneid*, lib. ix., v. 709.

Strabo gives a parallel account of the conflict between Pyræchmas, the Ætolian, and Degmeus, the Epeian. The former having armed himself with a sling, while his enemy had a bow and arrows,—the sling carrying its missile further than the bow,—Degmeus was slain before his weapons were available.—STRABO, *Geog.*, lib. viii., cap. iii., sect. 33.

As David went forth against Goliath, Saul inquired of Abner whose son he was, but the chief was unable to give the required information; the king, however, anxious to know, charged the general to ascertain. In this conversation, Saul calls David a youth, a stripling, —words which clearly indicate that he had scarcely attained manhood; and this, taken in connexion with the entire ignorance of Saul and Abner of the person and family of David, must be taken as a decisive proof that he had not, prior to this, resided with Saul as a minstrel, nor been employed in his service as armour-bearer; and, consequently, that the passage before spoken of, (1 Sam. xvi. 14–23,) is inserted at too early a period in the narrative.

While the king and all his court honoured and applauded the young man who had wrought out such deliverance for Israel, there was one whose attachment to him, at the same time immediate and intense, produced one of the most sincere and disinterested friendships recorded in history, and formed the subject of one of the most beautiful episodes to be found in any language. When David was brought to the house of Saul, Jonathan, the king's eldest son, a noble and valiant young man, who had seen and greatly admired the bearing and valour of David, now being brought into close contact with him, loved him as his own soul; and the young men from that hour became sincere and devoted friends. As tokens of this strong attachment, Jonathan divested himself of his robe and armour, and gave to David his garments, his sword, his bow, and his girdle. (1 Sam. xviii. 1–3.)

David could not have passed through this day without great excitement, and mental as well as bodily exercise. All his physical, intellectual, and religious powers, had been tested to the utmost. It was a day

in which were concentrated almost the labours and successes of a life ; and when it is considered that this was David's first appearance in public, his first warlike action, his earliest opportunity of realizing triumph and winning applause, it is not without reason that some curiosity is felt as to the state of his mind, his feelings and emotions, when retiring to rest after such a day. Happily, it is believed that we have the means of reading, even now, the inmost thoughts of the son of Jesse, on this most interesting occasion. Retiring into privacy, he poured forth the feelings of his grateful heart to God in the language of the ninth Psalm :—

“ I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart ;  
 I will show forth Thy marvellous works.  
 I will be glad and rejoice in Thee :  
 I will sing praise to Thy name, O Thou Most High.

Mine enemies are turned back,  
 They shall fall and perish at Thy presence.  
 For Thou hast maintained my right and my cause ;  
 Thou satest in the throne judging right.  
 Thou hast rebuked the heathen,  
 Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.  
 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual  
 end :  
 And thou hast destroyed cities ;  
 Their memorial is perished with them.  
 But the Lord shall endure for ever :  
 He hath prepared His throne for judgment.  
 And He shall judge the world in righteousness,  
 He shall minister judgment to the people in upright-  
 ness.  
 The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed,  
 A refuge in times of trouble.



And they that know Thy name will put their trust in  
Thee :

For Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek  
Thee." \*

With such feelings of devout thanksgiving and holy confidence in God, did David review the events of this momentous day. His faith had been justified by the Divine blessing; and hence he exultingly declares, "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." As soon as opportunity offered, David dedicated to God the sword of Goliath, which he had taken from the fallen giant, and placed it in the tabernacle.† It had been proclaimed, previous to the appearance of David on the scene, that the man who vanquished Goliath should have the daughter of Saul to wife; but we hear of no allusion to this after the conflict. Probably the very youthful appearance of David was the reason that no further mention of this promise was made at that time.

This was a glorious day for Israel; a day of great deliverance and triumph; a day crowned with victory and great success, and thus far unalloyed with calamity, or cause for regret. But this was not to

\* This appropriation of the ninth Psalm is made on the authority of Lightfoot, which is adopted by Townsend in his Chronological Arrangement. Much difficulty has arisen as to the appropriation of the Psalms of David, which were composed in the early part of his life, in consequence of the alterations afterwards made in them, to adapt them to the services of the sanctuary on Mount Zion. In the case before us, it is not probable that the eleventh or fourteenth verses stood originally as we now find them. When David slew Goliath, Zion was not a sacred place. The introduction of this name took place afterwards.

† This is asserted by Josephus, and confirmed by the testimony of Scripture; the sword having been found in the tabernacle when David fled from Saul to Nob, when, at his request, the high priest gave it to him.

continue. The influence and power of females in recognising and honouring the noble actions of the good and the brave, have always been felt in every state of society, and have always produced important results. It was so in Israel on this occasion. The portentous invasion which had been defeated, mainly by the heroism of David, had of necessity excited the greatest apprehension in the minds of the population generally, and especially among the Hebrew women. They were sure to have been the greatest sufferers if this invasion had been successful and permanent. On hearing therefore of the great victory obtained over the Philistine army, and the splendid triumph of Ephes-dammim, their gratitude and jubilant feelings knew no bounds.

The excess of their joy did not however prevent their discriminating between the relative claims of those who had been the instruments of working out this great deliverance for Israel, and in their judgment and feeling awarding to each the gratitude and praise which they seemed respectively to merit. Saul had long been recognised as an able king and a brave warrior. He had in his army many men of military experience and great power. That all these should for forty days have cowered before the profane boastings of a heathen, and have shrunk from a contest in which a stripling boy of twenty years won an easy victory, made a profound impression on the public mind.

So, when Saul and his troops returned from the scene of conflict and slaughter to the centre of the kingdom, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing with instruments of music, to meet them; but joyful as were the strains they poured forth, and loud as were their praises, there was one utterance of most painful import to the sensitive

mind of the king. The chorus of the Hebrew women's song was this, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." These words fell as a death knell on the ears of Saul. That he, first in official rank, and of more than ordinary mental and physical power, should be second in military prowess to any man in his army, and that man an inexperienced youth, was quite enough for the mind of Saul to bear, if no one knew it but himself; but that this should be paraded before the public by the songs of women; that they, in awarding him their gratitude and love, should place the shepherd boy as tenfold more their benefactor than himself, was more than his proud spirit could bear; so that in great anguish of mind he murmured, "What can he have more but the kingdom?"

David returned with Saul to his residence, and remained there for some time,—how long, we are not informed; but the significant note of the sacred writer, seems to intimate that it was but for a very short period. We are told that "Saul eyed David from that day and forward;" (1 Sam. xviii. 9;) that is, he looked on David as on one whom he envied, hated, and of whom he was afraid.\* This must have made the residence of David at court exceedingly unpleasant. It cannot be supposed that he could entirely divest himself of the ideas which his solemn anointing by the prophet Samuel must have fixed in his mind, and which in all probability would derive increasing power from his victory over Goliath; and to live under these influences, with the jealous eye of the king always on him, marking his conduct, and scrutinizing all his

\* This last is the rendering of the Septuagint, "Saul was alarmed on account of David."

actions, was more than the pious, honourable, and ingenuous mind of David could bear; so that after residing for some time with Saul he returned to his father's house, and resumed his former occupation of keeping the sheep.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FROM DAVID'S RETURN TO COURT TO THE TIME OF HIS SEEKING REFUGE IN THE CAVE OF ADULLAM.

How long David remained at his father's house, after his return from the court of Saul, cannot be exactly ascertained. Dr. Hales estimates the period at about six years, and the sacred text seems to bear out this conclusion. For although at his first appearance he was a ruddy youth, a stripling, he was at this time a man of established reputation as a musician, warrior, and man of general prudence and ability.

During this period the mental condition of Saul had become much worse. David having returned to his peaceful shepherd life, his former military popularity, and the jealousy which it had excited, were soon forgotten. But meanwhile an affliction fell on Saul, the magnitude of which it is not easy for us to estimate. In all his public labours and efforts for the improvement and consolidation of his kingdom, and in all his aspirations for the prosperity of his family, the words of the venerable seer rang in his ear, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou." Although this predicted doom was not actually carried into effect, yet it was sufficient to blight all the ambitious hopes he had indulged in respect to himself and his family, and, acting on his excitable temperament, produced a settled melancholy in his mind. This was not all. The sacred text says that

“the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.” (1 Sam. xvi. 14.) There does not seem to be any difficulty in perceiving the meaning of the former part of this sentence. It evidently means that the Spirit of the Lord, which came on him when he was anointed king to qualify him to discharge the duties of that high office, was now withdrawn. But what are we to understand by an evil spirit from the Lord troubling Saul? We shall not presume to solve this question. Some writers of note have regarded this infliction as a case of real demoniacal possession; but in that case it is not easy to conceive how music could administer relief, as we know that it did. Dr. Adam Clarke adopts the opinion of Dr. Scheuchzer, who refers it to a nervous disease. Without pronouncing an opinion on these theories, we may commend the observation of Dr. Delany on this subject to serious attention. Referring to the words quoted above, he says, “What more may be meant by this, than that God, for Saul’s hardened impenitence, withdrew His restraining and guiding grace, I cannot say: this only I am sure of, that no man living needs a heavier chastisement from Almighty God, than the letting his own passions loose upon him. The consequence to the mind would, I apprehend, in that case be much the same as it would be to the body, if the restraining presence of the air were removed, and all the muscles, vessels, and humours, left to the full freedom of their own powers and tendencies.”

Whatever might have been the precise nature of Saul’s disorder, there can be no doubt that it subjected him to fits of morbid melancholy, with occasional paroxysms of violent emotion, which gave his family and friends the gravest concern. Many measures for his restoration to

health were undoubtedly first tried ; and these failing, it was suggested that probably the soothing influence of music might have a favourable effect on the mind of the king. But although music was cultivated by the Hebrews, it does not appear that it had, at this time, assumed the character of a profession. If it had been, no doubt some practised professional performer would have been employed to play before the king. But failing this, the servants of Saul had to inquire for and search out some one who was skilful in this art, to wait on the king, and to play before him. In prosecuting these inquiries, some of them thought of David, and mentioned his name to the king, saying, " I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him." (1 Sam. xvi. 18.)

Saul adopted the suggestion of his servants, and sent a message to Jesse to this effect, " Send me David thy son who is with the sheep." Jesse complied ; and sent David with a kid, a bottle of wine, and bread, as a present to the king. David soon entered on the duties of his office, peculiar as it was. When this overwhelming and unhappy influence swept like a torrent over the mind of Saul, the son of Jesse took his harp and played, and under the soothing influence of the music the paroxysm passed away, and the king was well.\* The happy effect of this operation greatly

\* Dr. Kitto, in his " Bible Illustrations," gives some instances of the similar effect of music in the removal of disease. " One of these is the case of a person who was seized with fever, which soon threw him into very violent delirium, almost without any interval, accompanied by bitter cries, by tears, by terrors, and by an almost constant wakefulness. On the third day, a hint that fell from himself suggested the idea of trying the effect of music. Gradually, as the strain proceeded, his

endeared David to the king, so that he loved him greatly, and made him his armour-bearer. So greatly was Saul pleased with David, that he sent a request to Jesse that his son might remain permanently with him.

trouble | visage relapsed into a most serene expression, his restless eye became tranquil, his convulsions ceased, and the fever absolutely left him. It is true, that when the music was discontinued, his symptoms returned; but by frequent repetitions of the experiment, during which the delirium always ceased, the power of the disease was broken, and the habits of a sound mind re-established. Six days sufficed to accomplish the cure."

"More remarkable, as well as more truly parallel, is the case of Philip V. of Spain and the musician Farinelli, in the last century. The king was seized with total dejection of spirits, which made him refuse to be shaved, and rendered him incapable of appearing in council, or of attending to any affairs. The queen, after all other methods had been essayed, thought of trying what might be effected by the influence of music, to which the king was known to be highly susceptible. We have no doubt that the experiment was suggested to her by this case of Saul and David. The celebrated musician Farinelli was invited to Spain; and on his arrival, it was contrived that there should be a concert in a room adjoining the king's apartment, in which the artist should perform one of his most captivating songs. The king appeared at first surprised, then greatly moved: and at the end of the second air he summoned the artist to his apartment, and loading him with compliments and caresses, asked how he could reward such talent, assuring him that he would refuse him nothing. Farinelli, previously tutored, answered that he desired nothing, but that his majesty would permit his attendants to shave and dress him, and that he would endeavour to take his place in the council as usual. The king yielded; and from this time his disease gave way, and the musician had all the honour of the cure. By singing to his majesty every evening, his favour increased to such a degree, that he came to be regarded as first minister; in which capacity he conducted himself with such propriety and discretion, that the proud Spanish nobles about the court, instead of envying his prosperity, honoured him with their esteem and confidence." —DR. KIRTO'S "Bible Illustrations," (Samuel, Saul, and David,) p. 215.



This friendly regard for David, ardent as it seemed, did not continue. It appears likely that under the influence of his morbid, melancholy feelings, and especially when under the power of the malign agency which frequently excited him to frenzy, his jealous thoughts of David returned, and with these a strong wish to be rid of him. On one of these occasions, when under the full influence of this mania, while David was playing before him, he cast his javelin at the musician, intending to have slain him. This was done twice. It seems that, when excited and under the complete power of this agency, Saul was carried out of himself, and spoke and acted in a manner that clearly indicated the absence of all reasonable self-control, and showed that he was acted upon, and excited by, an overwhelming influence. When in this state, his manner resembled in some degree that of the prophets when wrought up into ecstasy by the power of Divine inspiration; and this circumstance explains the strange manner in which this event is described by the sacred record, where it is said:—"And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice." (1 Sam. xviii. 10, 11.) It was not, however, entirely on account of his morbid and excited feelings that Saul's renewed jealousy of David was called into action. He watched the conduct and demeanour of the young man with the utmost care; and the result was, that the conviction forced itself on his mind, "that the Lord was with him." This led him to fear that he

was "the man after God's own heart,—the neighbour of Saul that was better than he," of whom Samuel had spoken as destined to succeed him in the kingdom. On this account, we are told that Saul was afraid of David, and removed him from being his armour-bearer, and made him captain over a thousand men.

This measure did not at all improve the condition of the unhappy king. David conducted himself and his troop with great ability and prudence, and behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him. This still further excited the apprehension of Saul; and the more because he perceived that "all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them." To such an extent had the morbid jealousy of Saul obtained the ascendancy over all the better feelings of his mind, that he resolved to encourage the young hero to make desperate aggressions on the Philistines, in the hope that he would thus be cut off. To excite him to these enterprises, he promised to give him Merab, his elder daughter, to wife. David having modestly objected the low state of his family, the ungenerous king, notwithstanding the bravery David had displayed, acted on the intimation, and Merab was given to another.

Saul was then informed that Michal, another of his daughters, loved David; and another possible way of getting rid of David having occurred to the king, this report pleased him: and as he had, on the former occasion, expressed disinclination to be the king's son-in-law, the king, on this occasion, sent his servants to persuade him to comply with the proposal; and having procured his consent, Saul proposed to dispense with the usual dowry, on David's producing clear proof that he had destroyed one hundred of the Philistines. This proposal was made in the hope that David would

be slain in the dangerous enterprise. He, however, succeeded, and produced clear evidence that he had slain two hundred of the enemies of his country, and accordingly received Michal, the king's daughter, as his wife.

But the intimate family relationship formed by this marriage, did nothing to remove the jealousy and rancour of the king: he still persisted in his attempts on the life of David, until it became quite apparent that he had formed a settled purpose to destroy his son-in-law. Jonathan, whose love for David had increased just in proportion to his father's ill-will and enmity, now remonstrated with the king, and set forth the great services performed by his young friend, and the perils to which he had exposed himself for the public good. Saul was on this occasion accessible to reason, and sware to his son that David should not be slain. Having elicited this promise from his father, the noble-minded prince brought David again to the king, who received him kindly; and for a while amity appeared to be quite restored.

The war between Israel and the Philistines, which appears to have slumbered for some time, was recommenced with renewed vigour, and David again distinguished himself by remarkable deeds of heroism. "He went out and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him." (1 Sam. xix. 8.) This military prowess and success rekindled the flame of jealousy in the breast of Saul. All his former fears and antipathies were roused, and he again made repeated and violent, but unsuccessful attempts on the life of David. Determined, however, to accomplish his purpose, he sent messengers to watch his house, that they might apprehend him.

In this emergency, David sought relief from the source that never failed him. He poured forth his feelings and fears to God in the language of the fifty-ninth Psalm.

“ Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God !  
Defend me from them that rise up against me.  
Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,  
And save me from bloody men.

For, lo ! they lie in wait for my soul :  
The mighty are gathered against me ;  
Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord !  
They run and prepare themselves without my fault :  
Awake to help me and behold.  
Thou, therefore, O Lord God of hosts ! (the God of Israel,)  
Awake to visit all the heathen :  
Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors.  
They return at evening :  
They make a noise like a dog,  
And go round about the city.

Behold, they belch out with their mouths,  
Swords are in their lips :  
For who, say they, doth hear ?  
But Thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them ;  
Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.  
Because of His strength will I wait upon Thee :  
For God is my Defence.”

This prayer was answered, and this confidence justified ; for although David's danger was now most imminent, his wife, on this occasion, assisted him to escape. She let him down from a window in a basket ; and when the messengers of Saul insisted on taking him, she said he was sick. They returned to the king with this answer, but were sent back again, charged to

bring him in his bed, that he might be slain. It was then found that the delay thus obtained had enabled David to escape, and that his wife had placed an image in his bed to personate his body. Dr. Delany believes that his escape on this occasion was effected principally by means of a terrible, and probably supernatural, tempest and earthquake. The opinion as to the supernatural character of this scene may arise from the strong poetic language and figures employed in the eighteenth Psalm;—but there seems little reason to doubt that a portion of this Psalm, at least, was composed in allusion to the remarkable events of this day.

The messengers of Saul were watching David's house to kill him in the morning; and his wife, having said to him, "If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain," let him down from the window. He was, however, still in the city, and in danger from the guards and emissaries of Saul; and it was as necessary for him to escape from the city as from his house. How was this to be effected? A great tempest and much providential interposition aided him, which he thus gratefully celebrates:—

## PSALM XVIII.

"I will love Thee, O Lord, my Strength!  
 The Lord is my Rock, my Fortress, and my Deliverer;  
 My God, my Strength, in whom I will trust;  
 My Buckler, and the Horn of my salvation, and my  
 high Tower.

I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised:  
 So shall I be saved from mine enemies.

The sorrows of death compassed me,  
 And the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.  
 The sorrows of hell compassed me about:

The snares of death prevented me.  
In my distress I called upon the Lord,  
And cried unto my God :  
He heard my voice out of His temple,  
And my cry came before Him, even into His ears.  
Then the earth shook and trembled ;  
The foundations, also, of the hills moved  
And were shaken, because He was wroth.  
There went up a smoke out of His nostrils,  
Coals were kindled by it.  
He bowed the heavens also, and came down ;  
And darkness was under His feet.  
He rode upon a cherub, and did fly ;  
Yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.  
He made darkness His secret place ;  
His pavilion round about Him were dark waters  
And thick clouds of the skies.  
At the brightness that was before Him, His thick  
clouds passed,  
Hailstones and coals of fire.  
Yea, He sent out His arrows and scattered them ;  
Then the channels of water were seen,  
And the foundations of the world were discovered at  
Thy rebuke,  
O Lord, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils.

He sent from above,  
He took me, He drew me out of many waters.  
He delivered me from my strong enemy,  
And from them which hated me ;  
For they were too strong for me.  
They prevented me in the day of my calamity ;  
But the Lord was my Stay.  
He brought me forth also into a large place,  
He delivered me because He delighted in me.

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness ;  
According to the cleanness of my hands hath He  
recompensed me.

For I have kept the ways of the Lord,  
And have not wickedly departed from my God.

With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful,  
With an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright,  
With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure,  
And with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward.  
For Thou wilt save the afflicted people ;  
But wilt bring down high looks.  
For Thou wilt light my candle :  
The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.  
For by Thee have I run through a troop,  
And by my God have I leaped over a wall.  
As for God, His way is perfect :  
The word of the Lord is tried :  
He is a Buckler to all those that trust in Him."

The inscription of this Psalm, "A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul," shows that in it he refers to the perils and persecution to which he was exposed by that king ; and as we hear of no other occasion when he was placed in such imminent danger, and had to run through a troop and escape over the wall of a city, except at this time, it is extremely probable that David here refers to that awful night, when, aided by storm and tempest, thunder and lightning, he made his way through the guards of Saul, and escaped over the wall of the city.\* Saul was exceedingly angry at

\* Although we have no doubt of the accuracy of this conclusion, it

David's flight, and reproached Michal for having assisted him ; but she excused herself by saying that David had threatened to kill her unless she complied with his wishes.

David, having extricated himself from the enemies by whom he had been surrounded, fled to Ramah to Samuel. As far as can be learned, this was the first time that David had seen the venerable prophet since the memorable season of his anointing at Bethlehem. On this occasion, he gave the aged seer a full account of the conduct of Saul. Samuel then took David to Naioth, which is believed to have been one of his establishments for training young men for the prophetic office. David appears to have united himself to these, as if he would retire from the unquiet arena of public life to devote himself wholly to religious exercises and duties. If there was any place in all Israel where David could find security, it was here. Samuel had been for a long period universally recognised as an authorized prophet of God. He had also been, for many years, a divinely sanctioned judge, who administered the affairs of the nation with great prudence and ability. If such a man could not, in his own house, devoted wholly to religious purposes, afford protection to a citizen who had not been convicted or even charged with any crime, then it is certain there was no asylum in the country in which he could find protection.

When Saul heard that David was with Samuel, he sent messengers thither to take him. Neither the sacred character of the prophet, nor the sanctity of his house, offered any barrier to the determined rancour of the excited king ; but as no earthly power could save is probable that the Psalm was written, or revised, at the close of David's wars, and that he refers in it to other deliverances as well as to this particular one, as Wells, Townsend, and others have supposed.



the young hero, Heaven interposed for his deliverance. When the messengers arrived and saw Samuel and the company of prophets prophesying, the Spirit of God fell on them, and they also prophesied. Twice afterward he sent other messengers with the same result. Saul then went himself to Ramah, and from thence to Naioth; but as he approached the place, "the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night;" (1 Sam. xix. 23, 24;) thus, a second time, giving occasion for the inquiry, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" While the king thus lay divested of his royal apparel, (for this, and not the entire absence of clothing, is evidently meant,) under the power of this prophetic ecstasy, David, perceiving the impossibility of remaining with Samuel in safety, left Ramah.

On leaving the abode of Samuel, the persecuted young hero returned to Gibeah, and had a secret and very interesting interview with his friend Jonathan. Every part of their intercourse on this occasion is replete with deep importance and the greatest sympathy and tenderness. David opened the conversation by a passionate appeal to his friend, saying, "What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?" To this appeal, Jonathan replied, "God forbid; thou shalt not die." The noble-minded prince then went on to assure his friend that his father would do nothing without communicating it to him; and that if he heard him propose doing any injury to his friend, he would warn him of the danger. To this David replied, that the king well knew of the friendship sub-

sisting between them ; and that, therefore, he would carefully conceal from Jonathan his vindictive purpose, adding the emphatic assurance, " Truly, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death."

The young men then arranged a plan by which the intentions of Saul respecting David might be ascertained without exposing him to danger. The following day being the new moon, the usual feast of two or three days would immediately follow, when every member of the royal household would, in regular order, occupy his proper place at the king's table ; and as all the recent violence of Saul had taken place without any public condemnation of David, or declaration of hostility toward him, he also would be expected to be present. Jonathan then proposed that David should be absent ; and promised that if Saul inquired for him, he would elicit the king's purpose respecting his friend.

This course was taken, and fully answered the expectation of the parties. On the first day, David's seat was empty, but the king made no reference to it. On the second day, seeing the place again empty, Saul asked Jonathan why the son of Jesse was not with them ; then the prince gave the reply which had been preconcerted between them, namely, that he had given him leave to go to Bethlehem. On hearing this, the king became greatly enraged, and poured forth a torrent of invective against his son, declaring that, so long as the son of Jesse lived, he could not be established in the kingdom ; and that David, whose cause he advocated, should certainly be put to death. Jonathan then earnestly appealed to his father on behalf of his friend ; saying, " Wherefore shall he be slain ? What hath he done ? " As these questions admitted of no reply which justified the determination of the king, he became furious, and

actually cast a javelin at his son. Jonathan left the table in great anger, and on the next morning met David, according to the arrangement between them. The meeting was a most affecting one. The young friends wept together in deep sorrow: and, as no hope could now be entertained of removing the malignant determination of Saul, they renewed their solemn covenant of perpetual friendship, and separated.

The condition and prospects of David were at this time extremely gloomy. Persecuted with deadly ferocity by the sovereign whom he had so nobly served at the hazard of his life, and at the same time an object of hatred and abhorrence to the Philistines, on whom, in his patriotic efforts to defend his country, he had inflicted such terrible defeats, where could he look for safety or refuge? Disposed rather to trust himself with open and avowed enemies than remain within reach of Saul's malice and power, he resolved to make his way to the land of the Philistines. In his last interview with Jonathan, that prince had advised him to seek safety in flight; and, when taking this step, he expressed his feelings, fears, and confidence, in the following language:—

THE ELEVENTH PSALM.

“In the Lord put I my trust:  
How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your  
mountain?  
For, lo, the wicked bend their bow,  
They make ready their arrow upon the string,  
That they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.  
If the foundations be destroyed,  
What can the righteous do?”

The Lord is in His holy temple,

The Lord's throne is in heaven :  
His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men.  
The Lord trieth the righteous :  
But the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul  
hateth.  
Upon the wicked He shall reign snares,  
Fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest :  
This shall be the portion of their cup.  
For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness ;  
His countenance doth behold the upright."

This Psalm gives us a clear insight into the secret workings of David's mind. He is alone, unprotected, and defenceless ; yet he is confident. He has neither power nor friends on which to rely, but God is his refuge. " Why urge me to fly as a bird to the mountains, when God is my refuge ? " It is true, he admits that he is in as much danger as a bird, when the fowler is preparing the arrow or the sling to shoot it ; but he remembers that God is in His holy temple, from heaven the Almighty beholds him, and although He trieth the righteous, His fearful wrath rests upon the wicked, and a horrible tempest shall be their portion.

Having resolved to seek refuge among the Philistines, David proceeded towards Gath ; and, totally unprovided as he was with weapons or provisions, he came to the little city of Nob, where the Mosaic tabernacle was then standing, under the charge of Ahimelech, the high priest. David called on him, and pretending that he was on a special mission in the service of the king, and that its haste was so urgent that he had left home without necessary provisions or weapons, appealed to the high priest for assistance. Ahimelech, knowing that David was the king's son-in-law, suspected no deception, and having no other at hand, gave

him bread from the table of shew-bread in the tabernacle, and the sword of Goliath, which had been deposited there. Having obtained this temporary relief, he went on to Gath, and placed himself under the protection of Achish, the king.

Here he was soon discovered to be the Hebrew hero whose powers had inflicted such terrible losses on the Philistine forces; and, although the king treated him kindly, the clamours of the people were so urgent, that he was reduced to very extreme danger, and at length compelled to feign madness in order to secure his safety. He acted his part so well, that Achish scorned the appeal of his servants, and dismissed David from his presence. It was, however, very evident that this was an expedient which, however successful for the moment, could not be continued or repeated.

In this extremity, as he was wont, he sought refuge in God, and addressed Heaven in the language of the fifty-sixth Psalm:—

“ Be merciful unto me, O God :  
 For man would swallow me up ;  
 He fighting daily oppresseth me.  
 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up :  
 For there be many that fight against me, O Thou Most  
 High.

What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.  
 In God I will praise His word,  
 In God I have put my trust ;  
 I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

Every day they wrest my words :  
 All their thoughts are against me for evil.  
 They gather themselves together,

They hide themselves, they mark my steps,  
 When they wait for my soul.  
 Shall they escape by iniquity ?  
 In Thine anger cast down the people, O God.  
 Thou tellest my wanderings :  
 Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle :  
 Are they not in Thy book ?

When I cry unto Thee, then shall mine enemies turn back :  
 This I know ; for God is for me.  
 In God will I praise His word :  
 In the Lord will I praise His word.  
 In God have I put my trust :  
 I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.  
 Thy vows are upon me, O God :  
 I will render praises unto Thee.  
 For Thou hast delivered my soul from death :  
 Wilt Thou not deliver my feet from falling,  
 That I may walk before God in the land of the living ? ”

But, notwithstanding this strong confidence in God, and this earnest looking to Him, David's danger was imminent ; some plan of action must be devised. What was to be done ? Where now could this persecuted fugitive hope to find a refuge ? Driven to the last extremity, he remembered that in the mountains near Bethlehem there were many natural caverns, and that in one of these he might find concealment, while he would be sufficiently near his native place to obtain supplies of provisions. Leaving Gath, he accordingly crossed the country, and selected the cave of Adullam, about six miles from Bethlehem, for his hiding-place. This is described as an immense natural cavern, the mouth of which can only be approached on foot, along the side of the cliff. Travellers who have visited it

say, that it\* "runs in by a long-winding, narrow passage, with small chambers, or cavities, on either side. We soon came to a large chamber, with natural arches of great height; from this last there were numerous passages, leading in all directions, occasionally joined by others at right angles, and forming a perfect labyrinth, which our guides assured us had never been perfectly explored, the people being afraid of losing themselves. The passages are generally four feet high, by three feet wide, and were all on a level with each other. There were a few petrifications where we were: nevertheless, the grotto was perfectly clean, and the air pure and good." †

It is scarcely possible to find the case of a young man like David in the whole range of history; so meritorious, yet so persecuted; fully entitled to friendship and sympathy, yet completely friendless; the

\* It must be admitted that this is not regarded as a settled question. The town of Adullam was much farther to the west, near Eleutheropolis; but this city stood on the lowlands of Judah, a place not favourable to the concealment of a band of men. And if it be supposed that the cave was situated in the neighbouring hills, still it is not likely that David would be well acquainted with this locality, while it would be far from all his friends, and, if driven to fly from thence, he would have to go quite across the country to escape from the power of Saul. All these disadvantages are removed, and important benefits secured, if we suppose the cave of Adullam to be situated as stated above. If David took refuge in this large cavern, he would be near his family and friends, he would be within a short distance of the frontiers of Ammon and Moab; and, lastly, this cave is celebrated in monastic tradition, reaching back to the time of the Crusades, as the veritable hiding-place of David. All this appears to be confirmed by the facts, that soon after his arrival here, his family and friends are known to have gathered around him; and he took his father and mother, and placed them under the protection of the king of Moab.

† IRBY and MANGLES' Travels, pp. 340-1.

hero of the Hebrew army, and the successful champion of the state, yet hunted with brutal ferocity, and all the power of the government placed in requisition to shed his blood. But if any parallel can be found to him in these respects, in one aspect of his character he is confessedly unrivalled. No man can be found placed in such circumstances, evincing such piety of purpose, and such unflinching faith in God. See him driven from Gath by the clamour of the Philistines and the judgment of the king, wending his way through his own land,—a country which his valour had saved from foreign domination,—like a fugitive and an outlaw, to seek safety in caverns and dens of the earth; and then inquire, What are the thoughts of his mind? What the aspirations that rise from his heart to heaven? They are these:—

## PSALM XXXIV.

“ I will bless the Lord at all times :  
 His praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
 My soul shall make her boast in the Lord :  
 The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.  
 O magnify the Lord with me !  
 And let us exalt His name together.

I sought the Lord, and He heard me,  
 And delivered me from all my fears.  
 They looked unto Him, and were lightened :  
 And their faces were not ashamed.  
 This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,  
 And saved him out of all his troubles.  
 The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them  
 that fear Him,  
 And delivereth them.  
 O taste and see that the Lord is good !



Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.  
 O fear the Lord, ye His saints!  
 For there is no want to them that fear Him.  
 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger :  
 But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good  
 thing.

Come, ye children, hearken unto me :  
 I will teach you the fear of the Lord.  
 What man is he that desireth life,  
 And loveth many days, that he may see good ?  
 Keep thy tongue from evil,  
 And thy lips from speaking guile.  
 Depart from evil, and do good ;  
 Seek peace, and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,  
 And His ears are open unto their cry.  
 The face of the Lord is against them that do evil,  
 To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.  
 The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth,  
 And delivereth them out of all their troubles.  
 The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken  
 heart ;  
 And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.  
 Many are the afflictions of the righteous :  
 But the Lord delivereth him out of them all.  
 He keepeth all his bones :  
 Not one of them is broken.  
 Evil shall slay the wicked :  
 And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.  
 The Lord redeemeth the soul of His servants ;  
 And none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate."

What a marvellous contrast is here seen between the outward circumstances and the inner life of this young

Hebrew! Externally, he is in the utmost danger, exposed to privation and suffering, without provisions, or a place to lay his head; yet inwardly, he is full of confidence and peace. His heart swells with thanksgiving and praise to God. He is sure of Divine protection, for the angel of the Lord protects those that fear Him. If he sees approaching evil or impending danger, it is not in his own case, but because "the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut them off;" because "evil shall slay the wicked." In this state of mind, David returned to his native neighbourhood, and took refuge in the cave of Adullam.

## CHAPTER V.

### FROM DAVID'S RETIREMENT TO ADULLAM, TO THE DEATH OF SAUL.

ON taking up his abode in the cave, David acquainted his family and friends of the step which he had taken ; and on receiving this intelligence, his brethren and all his father's house joined him ; many other persons also appear to have eagerly availed themselves of the opportunity of rallying around him. " Every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them : and there were with him about four hundred men." (1 Sam. xxii. 2.) The circumstances of David now assume a new aspect. From the time that he was driven from his house and the court of Saul until now, he appears as a solitary fugitive ; but from this time, he must be regarded as the chief of a company of men, pledged to his service, and prepared to support his cause by force of arms.

It is necessary to form as correct an estimate as possible of this new position of the son of Jesse, in order to our perceiving the propriety of his conduct, and the real character of his future proceedings. David must not be regarded as a private citizen. He was not such, either in public opinion, or in his own conscientious convictions. The public knew him as a valiant young man, who had dared a danger from which every other man in the kingdom shrunk back in terror, and who in numerous victories had wrought out deliverance for Israel, and greatly humbled her proud-

est and most powerful foes. It was further generally known, that he had committed no crime, and that his being persecuted arose not from any fault of his, but by the unjust and persevering personal hostility of the king. Besides this, he knew from the fact of his anointing, and others knew, that he was the divinely designated future king of Israel. He was, therefore, on every ground, warranted to keep around him a sufficient guard of voluntary adherents to protect him against the lawless and malicious fury of the king.

There can be no doubt that if David had raised the standard of revolution, and placed himself at the head of the movement, he might have exposed to great peril the throne of Saul, if indeed he had not succeeded in altogether overthrowing it. But David always regarded Saul as the Lord's anointed king of Israel, and never acted as if his own anointing superseded that of the reigning sovereign. He therefore confined the influence of his name and character, and the efforts of himself and his retainers, to a purely defensive policy. Nor must it be supposed, from the terms in which the sacred record speaks of the men that gathered around David, that his band was composed of brigands or banditti. On the contrary, it is highly probable that, after the escape of David, the king dealt very hardly with his family and friends; and that there was, during this period of the reign of Saul, much laxity in the administration of justice; and in consequence of this much personal discontent and suffering, which would account for the numbers that congregated about the persecuted hero and put themselves under his command. The state of David's mind in those circumstances, and the source of his consolation and refuge, may be seen in the language of the Psalm composed at this time.

## PSALM CXLII.

“ I cried unto the Lord with my voice ;  
With my voice unto the Lord did I make my  
supplication.  
I poured out my complaint before Him :  
I showed before Him my trouble.  
When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,  
Then Thou knewest my path.  
In the way wherein I walked  
Have they privily laid a snare for me.  
I looked on my right hand, and beheld,  
But there was no man that would know me :  
Refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul.  
I cried unto Thee, O Lord !  
I said, Thou art my refuge,  
And my portion in the land of the living.  
Attend unto my cry,  
For I am brought very low :  
Deliver me from my persecutors ;  
For they are stronger than I.  
Bring my soul out of prison,  
That I may praise Thy name :  
The righteous shall compass me about ;  
For Thou shalt deal bountifully with me.”

It is highly probable that in these Psalms there are allusions to events and dangers, which are not mentioned in the brief history that has come down to us. In the statement above,—“ In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me,”—most likely the writer refers to some plot or machination of Saul, or of his servants, which is not mentioned in the narrative, but which placed David in great danger, and made a deep impression on his mind.

Another calamity at this season filled David with profound affliction. When he was flying from Saul on his way to Gath, while soliciting aid from the high priest at Nob, he saw Doeg, an Edomite, who was employed in the service of the king, as chief of his herdsmen. When Saul heard that David had returned from Gath, and was concealed somewhere in Israel, where he was gathering a band of men about him, he was deeply concerned, and, in his vexation, passionately accused all his servants with having conspired against him in favour of the son of Jesse. In answer to this appeal, Doeg told the king that he had seen David at Nob, where Ahimelech the high priest had provided him with victuals and a sword, and had inquired of the Lord for him. Although the last portion of this report was false, it served to inflame the anger of the king, who immediately summoned the high priest, and all the other priests resident at Nob, to his presence. On their arrival, the king charged them with conspiring with David against him, inasmuch as they knew of his having fled, and did not give him information of the fact. Ahimelech protested his innocence, declaring that he had not inquired of the Lord for him, and that in rendering him the aid which he did, he thought he was rendering service to his sovereign, as he regarded David as the king's son-in-law and most devoted minister. This reasonable defence had no effect on the mind of the king; he told Ahimelech that he should surely die, with all his father's house, and commanded his soldiers to put them to death. But notwithstanding the positive command, and the presence of the king, no Hebrew could be induced to raise his hand against the priests of the Lord. The king then commanded Doeg to execute his cruel mandate; the wicked Edomite obeyed, and slaughtered

all the priests, in all eighty-five innocent persons. Not satisfied with this act of vengeance, Saul sent and destroyed all the inhabitants of Nob, men, women, and little children, including even all the animals there in the general slaughter. Abiathar, a young son of Ahimelech, alone appears to have escaped the general massacre. On hearing of this extensive destruction, inflicted as a punishment for a single act of kindness rendered to himself, David was deeply grieved. This enormity convinced him that the ferocious spirit of Saul spurned every dictate of reason and justice in the gratification of his malignant passions; but while he saw that this furious disposition exposed him to very great danger, yet his deepest sympathies were excited on account of those who had been so mercilessly butchered. Under such impressions, David wrote the fifty-second Psalm, in special reference to the conduct of Doeg.

“ Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man ?

The goodness of God endureth continually.  
 Thy tongue deviseth mischief;  
 Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.  
 Thou lovest evil more than good;  
 And lying rather than to speak righteousness :  
 Thou lovest all-devouring words,  
 O thou deceitful tongue !

God shall likewise destroy thee for ever,  
 He shall take thee away,  
 And pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place,  
 And root thee out of the land of the living.  
 The righteous also shall see,  
 And fear, and shall laugh at him :

Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength ;  
 But trusted in the abundance of riches,  
 And strengthened himself in his wickedness.  
 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God :  
 I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.  
 I will praise thee for ever, because Thou hast done it.  
 And I will wait on Thy Name ;  
 For it is good before Thy saints."

This massacre, and the intense determination to destroy David which it evinced, led him to compose several other Psalms, of which the following are a few paragraphs.

## PSALM CIX.

" Hold not Thy peace, O God of my praise !  
 For the mouth of the wicked  
 And the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me :  
 They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.  
 They compassed me about also with words of hatred ;  
 And fought against me without a cause.  
 For my love they are my adversaries ;  
 But I give myself unto prayer.  
 And they have rewarded me evil for good,  
 And hatred for my love."

## PSALM XVII.

" Hear the right, O Lord !  
 Attend unto my cry,  
 Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned  
 lips.  
 Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence ;  
 Let Thine eyes behold the things that are equal.  
 Thou hast proved my heart ;  
 Thou hast visited me in the night ;  
 Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing ;



I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.  
 Concerning the works of men,  
 By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the  
     paths of the destroyer.  
 Hold up my goings in Thy paths,  
 That my footsteps slip not."

## PSALM CXL.

" Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man,  
 Preserve me from the violent man ;  
 Which imagine evils in their heart ;  
 Continually are they gathered together for war.  
 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent ;  
 Adder's poison is under their lips.  
 Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked ;  
 Preserve me from the violent man ;  
 Who have purposed to overthrow my goings.  
 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords.  
 They have spread a net by the wayside ;  
 They have set gins for me."

## PSALM XXXV.

" Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive  
     with me :  
 Fight against them that fight against me.  
 Take hold of shield and buckler,  
 And stand up for my help.  
 Draw out also the spear,  
 And stop the way against them that persecute me :  
 Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.  
 Let them be confounded and put to shame  
 That seek after my soul :  
 Let them be turned back and put to confusion  
 That devise my hurt.

Let them be as chaff before the wind :  
 And let the angel of the Lord chase them.  
 Let their way be dark and slippery :  
 And let the angel of the Lord persecute them.  
 For without cause have they hid for me their net in a  
 pit,  
 Which without cause they have digged for my soul."

## PSALM LXIV.

" Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer.  
 Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.  
 Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked,  
 From the insurrection of the workers of iniquity.

Who whet their tongue like a sword,  
 And bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter  
 words ;  
 That they may shoot in secret at the perfect :  
 Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.  
 They encourage themselves in an evil matter :  
 They commune of laying snares privily ;  
 They say, Who shall see them ?  
 They search out iniquities ;  
 They accomplish a diligent search :  
 Both the inward thought of every one of them and  
 the heart is deep."

These, although only the opening portions of these several sacred poems, form a kind of autobiographical sketch of the outward and inward history of David during this period ; and this will be more fully apparent, if the whole of these Psalms is read. They exhibit, in clear and affecting language, the dangers by which he was beset, the various combinations and contrivances which were employed to ensnare and

destroy him ; they show the transparent conscientiousness by which he was influenced, the spirit of prayer in which he lived, and the unfaltering confidence in God which continually sustained him.

When David had established himself at Adullam, he received several important accessions to his band ; some of the best and bravest men in the various tribes of Israel, attracted by his known valour, and convinced of the justness of his cause, came and offered their services to him. Among these were eleven eminent officers of the Hebrew army, the lowest in rank being a captain over a hundred men, and others captains over a thousand ; “ men of war, fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.” (1 Chron. xii. 8-14.) Three of the greatest heroes, who stood out as superior even to the thirty mighty men of David's army, are also found among the accessions to his band at this time,—Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah. Amasa also joined David while at Adullam, with a select company of valiant men from Judah and Benjamin. As several of these were from Saul's own tribe, David, on seeing them approach, felt strong suspicion of their motive in coming ; but, conscious of his innocence, and full of confidence in God, he went out to meet them, and said, “ If ye be come peaceably to help me, then my heart shall be knit unto you ; but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in my hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it.” Then a special influence rested on the mind of Amasa,\* and

\* This person, in the sacred text, is called Amasai ; but as this name does not again occur in the narrative, it is presumed that Amasa, the son of David's sister, is meant. (2 Sam. xvii. 25.)

he said, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse; peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be unto thine helpers, for thy God helpeth thee." Then David received them, and made them captains in his band. (1 Chron. xii. 16-18.) It is evident from these hints as to the appointment of captains, that David gave great attention to the organization of his company of followers, and thus made them as efficient as possible in war, and under complete control when not actually engaged in warfare.

As Jesse and his wife were now advanced in years, David felt unwilling to expose them to the hazards and inconveniences of his present mode of life; so he availed himself of his proximity to the territory of Moab, to take his parents into that country, and to place them under the protection of the king. This sovereign appears to have received them kindly, and to have provided for them; for the sacred text says that they "dwelt with him all the time that David was in the hold." (1 Sam. xxii. 4.) And the Jewish historian states, that "the king of Moab paid great respect to David's parents, all the time they were with him."\* From this circumstance, it has been conjectured that Ruth, who was a Moabitess, and the grandmother of Jesse, was in some way connected with the royal family. It cannot now be ascertained whether there is any foundation for this surmise, but it renders it probable that the family of Ruth was at least of some distinction.

It has been usual for a certain class of writers to speak of David and his company as lawless rebels and robbers. Many of the facts previously given, and others that will be related, afford a sufficient refutation

\* JOSEPHUS, *Antiq.*, vi., xii., 8.

of this censure. But there is one incident which occurred at this period, which for daring courage, unbounded devotion to a chief, touching tenderness, and highly elevated self-denial, has never been excelled in the military annals of the world. The Philistines had again invaded Israel, had pushed forward their advanced guard as far as Bethlehem, and held possession of the neighbourhood. The mind of David was prostrated by this intelligence. That his native fields, the scenes of his youthful and happiest days, should be trodden down by idolatrous invaders, and he be utterly unable to assist in repelling the aggression, was more than he could bear; and, under the pressure of this feeling, he was heard to exclaim, "O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" On hearing this, Jashobeam, Eleazer, and Shammah determined to gratify the wishes of their chief; so they cut their way through the host of the Philistines, drew water from the well at the gate of Bethlehem, and, returning in safety, presented it to David. But he, with equal piety and nobility of mind, would not drink it, but poured it out unto the Lord, and said, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing! Shall I drink the blood of these men, who have hazarded their lives? For at the hazard of their lives have they brought it."\* (2 Sam. xxiii. 15-17.) While we recognise the bravery of these heroes, the conduct of David must be admitted to equal, if not to surpass, the much lauded actions of Alexander and of Cato, in somewhat similar circumstances.†

Another incident which occurred in this part of the

\* KENNICOTT'S Dissertations, i., p. 256.

† PLUTARCH'S Alexander, c. 22; LUCAN, Phars., lix., v. 438.

history, shows the watchful care of Providence over him, and the importance with which his fate and fortunes were invested. "The prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold: depart, and get thee into the land of Judah." Whether this prophet came to Adullam with the eleven eminent soldiers of that tribe, or was sent to him specially with this message, cannot be ascertained; but David respected the admonition, and leaving Adullam, took refuge in the forest of Hareth, somewhere in the hill country of Judah.

Whilst remaining in this locality, David was informed that the Philistines were inflicting terrible injuries on the inhabitants of the Hebrew town of Keilah, who were at this time engaged in their harvest. These enemies came up in companies, and, killing or driving off the Hebrews, robbed the threshing floors of the grain, and in other respects inflicted on them grievous injuries. Affected by this report, David inquired of the Lord whether he should go down "and smite these Philistines." The Divine response was, "Go and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah." But when this project was communicated to David's troop, the men objected, saying, "We be afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we come to Keilah, against the armies of the Philistines?" This demur induced David again to inquire of the Lord, when "the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand." (1 Sam. xxiii. 4.) This silenced every objection; David led his band to Keilah, assailed the Philistines, defeated them with great slaughter, took away their cattle, and saved Keilah. Having delivered the city, he was received into it with his men, and for some time remained there. While resident at Keilah, Abiathar, the son of Abimelech, who escaped the

slaughter of Nob, came to David, bringing the sacred ephod with him.

But it was not likely that David with his men could reside in a fortified city, without the fact being made known to Saul; so it happened in this case. Saul, on being told that David was at Keilah, rejoiced in the confidence of being able to secure his prey, and to accomplish his object in the destruction of the whole band. He accordingly collected his troops for the purpose of investing Keilah. It is, however, remarkable, that in all cases David was informed of the movements of the king so as to be prepared for them. On being aware of the king's design in this instance, he inquired of the Lord through Abiathar, the priest, whether Saul would certainly come to Keilah against him, and whether, if he should, the men of Keilah would deliver him up to Saul. The replies were, "Saul will certainly come down, and the men of Keilah will deliver thee up to him."

On receiving this information, David and his men left the city, recrossed the hill country of Judah, and took refuge in the wilderness between it and the Dead Sea. But on leaving Keilah, he was deeply affected by the ingratitude and unprincipled conduct of its inhabitants, whom he had saved, but who would have given him up to his bitter enemy to be destroyed; and in thankfulness for his deliverance, although probably still pursued by his foes, he expressed himself in the following terms:—

## PSALM XXXI.

"In Thee, O Lord! do I put my trust;  
 Let me never be ashamed:  
 Deliver me in Thy righteousness.  
 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily:

Be Thou my strong Rock, for a House of defence to  
save me.

For Thou art my Rock and my Fortress ;  
Therefore for Thy Name's sake lead me, and guide me.  
Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for  
me ;

For Thou art my strength.

Into Thy hands I commit my spirit :

Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

I have hated them that regard lying vanities :

But I trust in the Lord.

I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy :

For Thou hast considered my troubles ;

Thou hast known my soul in adversities ;

Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the  
enemy :

Thou hast set my foot in a large room.

Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble :

Mine eye is consumed with grief,

Yea, my soul and my belly.

For my life is spent with grief, and my years with  
sighing :

My strength faileth because of mine iniquity,

And my bones are consumed.

I was a reproach among all mine enemies,

But especially among my neighbours,

And a fear to mine acquaintance :

They that did see me without fled from me.

I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind :

I am like a broken vessel.

For I have heard the slander of many :

Fear was on every side :

While they took counsel together against me,

They devised to take away my life.



But I trusted in Thee, O Lord : .  
 I said, Thou art my God.  
 My times are in Thy hand :  
 Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies,  
 And from them that persecute me.  
 Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant :  
 Save me for Thy mercies' sake.  
 Let me not be ashamed; O Lord ;  
 For I have called upon Thee :  
 Let the wicked be ashamed,  
 Let the lying lips be put to silence ;  
 Which speak grievous things proudly  
 And contemptuously against the righteous.

O how great is Thy goodness,  
 Which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee ;  
 Which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in  
 Thee  
 Before the sons of men !  
 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence  
 From the pride of man :  
 Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion  
 From the strife of tongues.  
 Blessed be the Lord :  
 For He hath showed me His marvellous kindness in a  
 strong city.  
 For I said in my haste,  
 I am cut off from before Thine eyes ;  
 Nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my supplica-  
 tions  
 When I cried unto Thee.

O love the Lord, all ye His saints :  
 For the Lord preserveth the faithful,  
 And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart,  
All ye that hope in the Lord."

Thus thankful and confident in Divine guidance and protection, David led his band to a new locality, and occupied some strongholds on a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. (1 Sam. xxiii. 14.) Here David met with treatment of the most diverse and conflicting kind, encouragement and discouragement, solace and danger.

Jonathan, having heard of his being in this neighbourhood, came and sought him out, and the two friends had a private and deeply-affecting interview in a wood. This, their last meeting, brought out the noble and pious character of Jonathan into grand and bold relief. He was the eldest son of Saul, and consequently heir to the throne: but he knew that under the Hebrew theocracy God alone had the right to dispose of the kingdom of Israel; and he knew that God had disposed of it, and that by His express direction David had been anointed to succeed Saul in the kingdom. To defeat this Divine purpose, the frantic king was devoting his most strenuous exertions, hoping to cut off David, and by this means to secure the succession to the crown for his son. While, however, the father was thus vainly struggling to fight against the purpose of God, the son, who was more immediately interested, reverently recognised the theocratic character of the Hebrew government; and, with ardent and self-denying piety, heartily submitted to the will of Jehovah. To make a full communication of this submission of his, seems to have been one great object of his making this visit. How full of vital interest and importance are some of

the brief statements of the sacred narrative! Here we are told that Jonathan came to David, "and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the Lord." (1 Sam. xxiii. 16-18.) Where in history shall we find another such scene? Here the heir-apparent to the throne joyfully anticipates the elevation of his friend to that regal dignity, and piously reconciles himself to a subordinate position in obedience to the will of God. And more than this. Jonathan not only submitted to this humiliation, but exulted in it, and used the certainty of its accomplishment to nerve his friend to bear up against his adversities, and thus to strengthen his "hand in God."

While this beautiful and touching intercourse was taking place between these two friends, the Ziphites sent a message to Saul, informing him that David and his band were in their neighbourhood, and assuring him that if he came down, they would exert themselves to deliver the fugitives into his hand. The king received this message joyfully; and, with an affectation of piety, blessed them in the name of the Lord, and urged them to watch the movements of David, to mark the particular spot where he lay concealed, and then to come to him again with this information: "For," said the king, "it is told me that he dealeth very subtilly." David always conducted his affairs so as to be apprised of the plans, plots, and schemes of his enemies; and being aware of this conduct of the Ziphites, and of Saul's action thereon, he composed the following.

## PSALM LIV.

“Save me, O God! by Thy name,  
And judge me by Thy strength.  
Hear my prayer, O God!  
Give ear to the words of my mouth.  
For strangers are risen up against me,  
And oppressors seek after my soul:  
They have not set God before them.

Behold, God is my helper:  
The Lord is with them that uphold my soul.  
He shall reward evil unto mine enemies:  
Cut them off in Thy truth.  
I will freely sacrifice unto Thee:  
I will praise Thy name, O Lord! for it is good.  
For He hath delivered me out of all trouble:  
And mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.”

After thus seeking succour from God, David moved farther to the south, to the wilderness of Maon; then the treacherous Ziphites, urged on by Saul's emissaries, so carefully hung on his rear and watched his movements, that when the king and his troops arrived, they could point to him the exact locality where David lay. This was the occasion on which Saul and his soldiers completely surrounded the base of the hill, and felt sure of at last securing their prey; and as he gradually ascended the hill and drew his troops into a more close and compact line, all hope for David and his men seemed cut off. In this emergency the persecuted hero poured out his soul to God, in the language of the twenty-second Psalm, one of the most earnest and energetic of his compositions.

## PSALM XXII.

“ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ?  
Why art Thou so far from helping me,  
And from the words of my roaring ?  
O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest  
not :  
And in the night season, and am not silent.

But Thou art holy,  
O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.  
Our fathers trusted in Thee :  
They trusted, and Thou didst deliver them.  
They cried unto Thee, and were delivered :  
They trusted in Thee, and were not confounded.  
But I am a worm, and no man ;  
A reproach of men, and despised of the people.  
All they that see me laugh me to scorn :  
They shoot out their lip, they shake their head, saying,  
He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him :  
Let Him deliver him, seeing He delighted in him.  
Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my  
mother's breasts.  
I was cast upon Thee from the womb :  
Thou art my God from my mother's belly.

Be not far from me ; for trouble is near ;  
For there is none to help.  
Many bulls have compassed me :  
Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.  
They gaped upon me with their mouths,  
As a ravening and a roaring lion.  
I am poured out like water,  
And all my bones are out of joint :  
My heart is like wax ;

It is melted in the midst of my bowels.  
 My strength is dried up like a potsherd ;  
 And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws ;  
 And Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.  
 For dogs have compassed me :  
 The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me :  
 They pierced my hands and my feet.  
 I may tell all my bones :  
 They look and stare upon me.  
 They part my garments among them,  
 And cast lots upon my vesture.

But be not Thou far from me, O Lord :  
 O my strength, haste Thee to help me.  
 Deliver my soul from the sword ;  
 My darling from the power of the dog.  
 Save me from the lion's mouth :  
 For Thou hast heard me from the horns of the uni-  
 corns.  
 I will declare Thy name unto my brethren :  
 In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.

Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him ;  
 All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify Him ;  
 And fear Him, all ye the seed of Israel.  
 For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of  
 the afflicted ;  
 Neither hath He hid His face from him ;  
 But when he cried unto Him, He heard.  
 My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation :  
 I will pay my vows before them that fear Him.

The meek shall eat and be satisfied :  
 They shall praise the Lord that seek Him :  
 Your heart shall live for ever.

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn  
unto the Lord :  
And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship be-  
fore Thee.  
For the kingdom is the Lord's :  
And He is Governor among the nations.  
All they that be fat upon the earth shall eat and  
worship :  
All they that go down to the dust shall bow before  
Him :  
And none can keep alive his own soul.  
A seed shall serve Him ;  
It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.  
They shall come, and shall declare His righteous-  
ness  
Unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done  
this."

In noting this wonderful poem, as descriptive of David's condition at this time, two observations must be made. No reasonable doubt can be entertained that many of its most important passages were designed by the Holy Spirit to refer to Christ, and were more strictly and fully verified in His sufferings, than in the case of David or any other person. As this Psalm was afterward adapted to public worship in the tabernacle, it is very probable that clauses in the original composition were altered, and others added, to render it more useful in this service. Keeping these points in mind, the Psalm will be found strictly applicable to the circumstances which called it forth. At this time he, and his six hundred men, with their wives and little ones, are found in the caves and clefts of a mountain, the base of which is surrounded by the soldiers of Saul. From such a position brave and daring

men might escape, by cutting their way through the besieging force ; and David and his band were the men to attempt and, if possible, succeed in such an enterprise. But this could not possibly be done so as to offer protection to the women and children : as these could not be abandoned, the attempt was impossible ; while the resources of Saul were such, that he could continually increase his forces, and thus cut off every hope of escape from the besieged.

In these circumstances, what could be more natural than for David, who had been the subject of such numerous deliverances, to cry to God in the terms of the opening paragraph ? Having so strongly expressed his danger and his importunate prayers, he checks himself by a remembrance of Divine holiness, and encourages his faith by a recollection of the wonderful interpositions of God on behalf of the Hebrew fathers ; but then, shrinking from a comparison of himself with them, he exclaims, "I am a worm, and no man." David then, in a succession of striking imagery, exhibits the power, reproach, mockery, and threats to which he was exposed. "Bulls of Bashan," "fierce dogs," are mentioned, to describe the power and malice of Saul and his men ; reproach and mockery : "they shoot out the lip, they shake the head," they revile his trust in God ; they threatened his life, and probably spoke of dividing or casting lots for the spoil.

We cannot speak positively as to this ; but from the elevated positions which he and his men occupied, it seems highly probable that the powers, reproaches, and threats of Saul's army, and of the malicious Ziphites, were seen and heard by David, and made the basis of his earnest appeal to God. Yet having reviewed all these, and poured out his prayer to the Most High, light dawns on his mind, he recovers his confidence,



and, offering praise and thanksgiving to God, calls on all to unite with him in this holy exercise.

This confidence was justified. When every other refuge failed, and Saul seemed sure of his victim, a messenger hastily arrives at his camp, with the intelligence that the Philistines had again invaded the country. Saul was therefore compelled to call off his troops, and march them to repel this new aggression, so that David and all his company were once more free; he accordingly availed himself of the opportunity, and removed to the wilderness of Engedi near the Dead Sea.

The Philistine invasion does not appear to have been serious, for we soon find Saul in active pursuit of David. At this time, David and his people were concealed in one of the large caverns which abound in this locality, while the soldiers of Saul were spread abroad over the neighbouring rocks, when the king entered the cave for the purpose of obtaining temporary rest during the heat of the day. As he stood in the full light of the entrance, he was distinctly seen, while David and his men in the inner recesses of the cavern were shrouded in darkness. On seeing the king enter, David seems to have thought that his refuge was discovered, and that his case was hopeless: in this emergency, with his usual piety, he sought help by earnest prayer to God.

But he had scarcely time to pray before he found that Saul was unconscious of the presence of any one, and sunk in repose. The attendants, anxious that this opportunity might not be lost, urged David to destroy his persecutor, and thus to terminate at once his danger, and their wanderings; but David sternly refused, saying, "The Lord forbid that I should do

this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." But, quietly approaching the place where Saul lay, he cut off the skirt of the king's robe, and retired. Shortly after Saul awoke and left the cave; David, unperceived, followed him, until they became separated from each other by some considerable space, when David cried after the king, and, having obtained his attention, bowed reverentially to him, and asked why he believed those who told him that David sought his injury; adding, that he was with him in the cave, and might have killed him, and was urged to do so, but he refused to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed. He then lifted up the skirt of Saul's robe as a confirmation of the truth of his statement, and as a demonstrative proof that he had been fully in his power. He closed his address by an earnest appeal to God to judge between them. The king was deeply affected at these words, and wept: he then confessed that David was more righteous than he; for, said he, "thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." And what is more strange, the king added, "I know well that thou shalt assuredly be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand: swear now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house." So David swore unto Saul, and the king went home. But, as if to show David's estimate of Saul's sincerity, it is significantly added, "But David and his men gat them up into the hold." (1 Sam. xxiv. 9-22.)

David celebrated his deliverance in his usual manner.

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## PSALM LVII.

“Be merciful unto me, O God! be merciful unto me:  
For my soul trusteth in Thee:  
Yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my  
refuge,  
Until these calamities be overpast.  
I will cry unto God most high;  
Unto God that performeth all things for me.  
He shall send from heaven, and save me  
From the reproach of him that would swallow me up.  
God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.

My soul is among lions;  
And I lie even among them that are set on fire,  
Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and  
arrows,  
And their tongue a sharp sword.  
Be thou exalted, O God! above the heavens;  
Let Thy glory be above all the earth.  
They have prepared a net for my steps;  
My soul is bowed down:  
They have digged a pit before me,  
Into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.  
My heart is fixed, O God! my heart is fixed:  
I will sing and give praise.  
Awake up, my glory! awake, psaltery and harp!  
I myself will awake early.  
I will praise Thee, O Lord! among the people,  
I will sing unto Thee among the nations.  
For Thy mercy is great unto the heavens,  
And Thy truth unto the clouds.  
Be Thou exalted, O God! above the heavens:  
Let Thy glory be above all the earth.”

The fifty-eighth Psalm may be read as a continuation

of this, written for the same purpose and about the same time. Just at this juncture, the prophet Samuel died. Although from his great age, and the appointment of a king over Israel, he had almost wholly retired from active public duty, yet his death was a most noteworthy event. He was the grand link which united the days of the kingdom with the time of the judges. He was the greatest witness for the reality and integrity of the theocracy that had appeared since the death of Joshua.

David, with his band, continued roaming over the wilderness between Engedi and Maon on the eastern slopes of the southern hill country of Judah. It is worthy of remark that neither the dangers to which he was exposed, nor the anxieties and toils he had to endure, prevented him from forming matrimonial connexions. His first wife was Ahinoam of Jezreel. When, or under what circumstances, this marriage took place, is not known: but his second marriage is connected with an interesting incident, which casts considerable light on the conduct and the manner of life of David and his troop at this time.

There resided in Maon a descendant of Caleb, a wealthy man who had great possessions and very large flocks at Carmel.\* The servants of this person, whose name was Nabal, were, at the time referred to, engaged in shearing his sheep. Sheep-shearing was regarded among the Hebrews as a season of festivity and joy, when the wealthy were accustomed to make presents to their neighbours and friends. Acting on this custom, David sent ten of his young men to Nabal, reminding him that, while he was with his

\* This Carmel was not the mount celebrated as the scene of Elijah's sacrifice, but a district in the south of Judah about three hours' ride from Hebron.—ROBINSON'S "Biblical Researches," ii., 466.

band in the neighbourhood of Carmel, they had not only abstained from taking anything from him, or from his servants, but that they had so far protected his property that nothing was missing all the time he was there, although the district was much exposed to the incursions of roaming Arabs and of the neighbouring Idumeans. On this ground David instructed his young men to solicit from Nabal in a delicate manner some present from his hand. Nabal, however, not only coarsely refused, but sent the young men back to their master with a very insolent reply. Stung with this reproachful treatment, David instantly called his men to arms, and determined to march at once and destroy Nabal and all his family.

While he was thus engaged, one of Nabal's servants told his mistress, Abigail, the beautiful and sagacious wife of Nabal, of the rude conduct of his master, bearing testimony to the benefit the property had derived from David's troop, and at the same time assuring her that the spirited chief would not submit to such treatment without retaliation, and therefore that the whole household stood in imminent danger. Abigail, without speaking to her husband on the subject, instantly prepared a large and handsome present of choice provisions, which was borne by her servants : accompanying them, she proceeded towards David's abode. On the way she met him at the head of four hundred men approaching Nabal's house, and addressed him in a very courteous, wise, and conciliatory speech, beseeching him to overlook the folly of her husband, and to abstain from shedding innocent blood. David blessed her in the name of the Lord, accepted her present, and returned to his abiding place.

As Nabal was drunk that night, Abigail said nothing to him of the danger which he had escaped ; but on the

following day she fully informed him of what had taken place, when, as the sacred narrative states, "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone." From that state of terror he seems not to have recovered; for he sickened and expired within ten days.

From this account it appears evident that David, although he had six hundred men, with their families, to supply daily with provisions, did not subsist by general rapine and robbery. He either obtained supplies by assailing the nomade inhabitants of the neighbouring deserts, who were the hereditary enemies of Israel, or by the free-will contributions of his friends.

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he sent his servants to Abigail to propose to take her, by marriage, unto himself. She assented to the overture, and, attended by five female domestics, followed the messengers of David, and became his wife.

David having returned to his old haunts on the hill of Jeshimon, the Ziphites again gave Saul information of his being in their neighbourhood; and Saul immediately repaired to the spot, attended by three thousand men. But David exceeded the king in all the arts of generalship. He sent out spies, tracked all the movements of Saul, and finding that he was encamped on the hill of Hachilah, before Jeshimon, in an artificial fortification temporarily defended by baggage-waggons, he determined to penetrate the encampment at night. So, accompanied by Abishai, he went; and succeeded, while the king, Abner, and all the soldiers were fast asleep, in reaching the place where the king reposed, and in carrying away the spear and the cruse of water, which were beside him. Having done this, they retired.

In the morning, David stood on the brow of the opposite hill, and calling to Abner, reproached him

severely with having left his master exposed to danger during the night. Saul heard and recognised the voice of David; and on again seeing proofs that he had been entirely in his power, while lying helpless in sleep, he once more confessed his folly and wickedness in this continued persecution of a man who, having had repeated opportunities of destroying him, had always abstained from doing him harm. History affords numerous instances of such nocturnal exploits, in penetrating the camp of an enemy; but we shall seek in vain for any example of such forbearance, in sparing the life of an implacable persecutor, when he was fully in the power of his intended victim.

While David was wandering through different parts of this wilderness, and placed in extreme peril by the communications of his movements which the inhabitants maliciously conveyed to Saul, he gave utterance to his feelings in the words of the following Psalm :—

## PSALM CXX.

“In my distress I cried unto the Lord,  
 And He heard me.  
 Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips,  
 And from a deceitful tongue.

What shall be given unto thee?  
 Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?  
 Sharp arrows of the mighty,  
 With coals of juniper.

Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech,  
 That I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

My soul hath long dwelt  
 With him that hateth peace.  
 I am for peace :  
 But when I speak, they are for war."

Although, touched with remorse, and confessing his sin, Saul had returned to his place, David could put no reliance on his contrition or permanent change of purpose ; and, being weary of this incessant journeying and peril, he determined to take his troop, and place himself and them under the protection of Achish, king of Gath.\* He carried this purpose into effect, and appears to have been received courteously by the king, who assigned the men quarters for themselves and their families in the royal city. But David perceived that, while placed in comparative safety, being beyond the reach of his malignant enemies, he was in danger of contamination from constant contact with idolaters, and other impending evils : so he sought refuge from God in the language of

## PSALM CXLI.

" Lord, I cry unto Thee : make haste unto me ;  
 Give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto Thee.  
 Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense ;  
 And the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.  
 Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ;  
 Incline not my heart to any evil thing,  
 To practise wicked works with men that work iniquity :  
 And let me not eat of their dainties.  
 Let the righteous smite me ; it shall be a kindness :

\* According to Jewish tradition, this Achish was son of him to whom David at first fled.



And let him reprove me ; it shall be an excellent oil,  
Which shall not break my head :  
For yet my prayer shall be in their calamities.

When their judges are overthrown in stony places,  
They shall hear my words ; for they are sweet.  
Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth,  
As when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the  
earth.

But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord :  
In Thee is my trust ; leave not my soul destitute.  
Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me,  
And the gins of the workers of iniquity.  
Let the wicked fall into their own nets,  
Whilst that I withal escape."

But although, while at Gath, they were in a place of safety, it was not the pleasure of David to be continually under the inspection of the king and his courtiers. He therefore solicited the appropriation of some town in the country, as a dwelling-place for himself and his people. In accordance with his wish, Achish gave him Ziklag, a small city, situate somewhere in the south-east of the territory of the Philistines, and therefore bordering on the southern desert, and on the extreme western frontier of Judah.

During his stay in this city, David made frequent incursions on the nomade inhabitants of the deserts,—on the Geshurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites. In these expeditions he took great spoil of goods and cattle, of which he sent a portion to Achish, pretending that he had obtained it by making inroads on the coasts of Israel. This exceedingly pleased the Philistine king ; who, from these facts, concluded that he had placed himself in decided antagonism to his former.

countrymen, and that he might therefore count on him as a permanent and faithful ally.

While David was at Ziklag, he had some important accessions to his followers ; who, if not many in number, were brave and valiant men, and afterwards became the greatest ornaments of the Hebrew army. He resided in this quiet little city sixteen months. At the expiration of this time, the united confederacy of the Philistine chiefs had planned an invasion of the Hebrew country on a grand scale ; and the king of Gath being called to march his contingent to join the army, did so, taking with him, as a part of his forces, David and his troop. Although, however, the king of Gath had the fullest confidence in the fidelity of David, it was not so with the other Philistine chiefs. They protested against marching in his company, and compelled Achish to send him back ; so that he returned to Ziklag, after an absence of three days. How David would have acted had he and his men been allowed to remain a part of the Philistine army, it is impossible to say. It can scarcely be supposed that he would have turned his arms against those who had received him as a helpless fugitive, and protected and to some extent provided for him ; still less is it likely that he would have fought on the side of idolaters against the Lord's anointed, and the people of the Lord, while they were endeavouring to repel an unprovoked aggression on their fields and homes ; although it must be admitted that the duplicity shown in the reports of David respecting his incursions, is strongly at variance with the general truthfulness and manly sincerity of his character. Happily for him, the decision of the Philistine chiefs saved him from this embarrassment. Arriving at Ziklag, the whole band were plunged into immediate and intense affliction. They found the city

in ruins, having been burned with fire; and all the inhabitants, with their own wives, children, and property, carried off by a horde of Amalekites.

At first, overwhelmed with sorrow, they wept bitterly, and deplored their loss; then the men gave way to anger, and talked of stoning the chief, to whom they were so devotedly attached. David, in this emergency, acted in a manner worthy of himself: "he encouraged himself in the Lord his God," and then called for Abiathar the priest, to bring the sacred ephod, that he might inquire of the Lord. He then put these two questions: "Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them?" The Divine response was clear and satisfactory: it was, "Pursue; for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without doubt recover all." He acted on this Divine revelation; and although by the haste and urgency of the march two hundred of his men fainted by the way, and he was obliged to leave them behind, yet, with the other four hundred, he continued the pursuit, and by the aid of a young Egyptian, whom he found in the way, was guided to the place where the spoilers lay revelling in luxury and security.

By a judicious disposition of his men, David assailed and completely destroyed the Amalekites, with the exception of four hundred young men, who escaped on camels. By this exploit he not only recovered his wives, and the wives and families of his men with all their property, but obtained immense spoil in addition, which the marauders had taken from the frontier towns of Judah and of the Philistines. Returning with his booty to the two hundred men who had been left behind, some of those who had accompanied him objected to their sharing in the spoil, beyond the recovery of their own families and property. David

replied to this illiberal proposal, that those who were unable to continue the march, should share equally with those who had taken an actual part in the completion of the enterprise. And this rule he afterward established, as a permanent part of the military law of the Hebrew kingdom.

While David was the subject of these vicissitudes, Saul was placed in still more painful circumstances. Without confidence in himself or in God, weakened by the loss of David and his brave companions, he was driven by his distress to consult the woman of Endor,\* who held intercourse with a familiar spirit. From this source he was assured of his own approaching fate. Yet it is impossible to withhold our admiration from the man, who, under all these adverse circumstances, crushed in spirit, and in the presence of impending death, bravely marshalled his forces, and met the foes of his country, superior as they were in numbers, in the possession of better weapons of warfare, and in military tactics; and who, in company with his noble sons, fought with heroic valour, and died on the field, in a fruitless effort to maintain the independence of his country.

The life of Saul has never yet been written, nor does it come within our province to undertake the task; but enough appears on the surface of the account to show that he was, as we have before said, in the usual acceptation of the term, a great man. Rash and impetuous; unsanctified in temper, and, when excited or provoked by rivalry, jealous and malevolent; he was, nevertheless, on other occasions, accessible to the finer feelings of human nature. He

\* Jewish tradition supposes her to have been the mother of Abner, and that on account of this relationship she escaped being destroyed with the others.

was certainly endowed with a lofty capacity for government and war. When the state of the Hebrews, at the time that he assumed the reins of government, is considered, it must be admitted that he introduced great improvements in the internal policy of the country, and in respect to its means of military defence. There was, doubtless, truth also in the eulogy pronounced on him by David, who said, "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel."

Returning to Ziklag, David found himself in possession of such a vast amount of spoil, that he was able to send valuable presents to the principal cities of Judah, and to other places where he had been kindly treated; and to his friends, in different parts of the country, who had rendered him assistance in his wandering life. This fact must have produced a very powerful impression in his favour. It would be regarded as an extraordinary circumstance, that just at the time when Saul and his army were unable to preserve the land from the aggressions of the Philistines, David, who had been driven from the country as a fugitive and an outlaw, should not only have earned the means of independent support for himself and his troop, but also be able to send liberal presents to his numerous friends.

Just at this juncture the decisive battle took place between the Hebrew and Philistine armies. It appears to have been fought on both sides with determined resolution, but the Hebrews were at length overpowered. Compelled to retreat up the slopes of Mount Gilboa, they were completely routed, and Saul and his sons slain. Intelligence of this calamity was brought to

David by a young Amalekite, three days after his return to Ziklag.

There are few finer scenes in history than that presented in the conduct of David on this melancholy occasion. Separated from his family, his friends, the worship of God, and compelled to seek refuge in a land of idolaters, the death of his inveterate enemy at once removed all the causes of this complicated misery. Then, as David had been by Divine appointment anointed to be king over Israel, the throne being now vacant, there was no obstacle to his assuming the sovereignty, but the want of recognition on the part of the people; and it did not appear likely that this would be long withheld. In a word, this event removed all David's difficulties, and opened to him the way to the highest honour and dignity.

In these circumstances, how did David conduct himself? Did he evince any undue exultation? Were any signs of joy observable in his manner or action? The very reverse was the case. As the bearer of the intelligence admitted that it was by his hand that the wounded king had died, David commanded him to be instantly put to death, which was done. "Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him: and they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword." (2 Sam. i. 11, 12.) Then David poured forth the feelings of his heart in a song of lamentation, in terms the most pathetic and tender that can be conceived:—

"The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places:  
How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,  
Publish it not in the streets of Askelon ;  
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,  
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.  
Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew,  
Neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of  
offerings :  
For there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away,  
The shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed  
with oil.  
From the blood of the slain,  
From the fat of the mighty,  
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,  
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.  
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their  
lives,  
And in their death they were not divided :  
They were swifter than eagles,  
They were stronger than lions.  
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,  
Who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights,  
Who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.  
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle !  
O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.  
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan :  
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me ;  
Thy love to me was wonderful,  
Passing the love of women.  
How are the mighty fallen,  
And the weapons of war perished ! ”

Thus it is seen that, instead of making any expression of pleasure, David, with a lofty generosity of feeling, of which all but a great mind must be incapable, deplored the national calamity, and especially the

loss of the king and of his son. The death of Saul at once recalled to his memory the virtues and prowess of the fallen monarch. There is not in this song the slightest allusion to his injustice, no mention of his malignity, no reference to his bloodthirsty persecution; but, with earnest, sincere lamentation, David mourned over the death of Saul and Jonathan, and perpetuated their praise to future ages.



## CHAPTER VI.

### FROM DAVID'S RETURN TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL, TO THE TIME WHEN HE WAS ESTABLISHED AT JERU- SALEM.

No sooner had David done justice to his feelings in regard of the fallen king and prince, than he directed his attention to his public and private duties. The first thing which seems to have excited his attention, was to inquire into the cause which led to the victory of the Philistines over the army of Saul. A brief investigation appears to have convinced him that it was mainly owing to the effect produced by the Philistine archers. The bow, as a weapon of war, had been long in use by chiefs and select warriors. Jonathan had a bow; and we hear of some men of Benjamin armed with bows and slings, who joined David at Ziklag. (1 Chron. xii. 1, 2.) But the persons so spoken of are always regarded as men of peculiar prominence, and eminent in warfare. This is the first time that we hear of the bow being extensively used by the soldiers of the army. Saul himself appears to have been wounded and disabled by their arrows; and probably serious loss was inflicted on his troops, before their hand-to-hand weapons could be used.

David having noted these important facts, determined to introduce this effective weapon into the Hebrew army, and thus to place his countrymen on equal terms with their enemies. So we are told, "He bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow."

These directions appear to have been given at length in the Book of Jasher.

While David was considering his circumstances, and his future course of action, he found that the eyes of his countrymen were on him. "For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God." (1 Chron. xii. 22.) Thus encouraged, he inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And He said, Unto Hebron." Obedient to the Divine direction, David and all his attendants, with their wives and families, went up to Hebron. His arrival there was hailed with great satisfaction by the people. This city was the centre and sacred metropolis of the tribe of Judah. It was the portion of Caleb, the prince of that tribe in the days of Joshua, and where he and the other patriarchs of the family were buried. The presence in the chief city of his tribe, with a powerful band of trained soldiers, of the son of Jesse, who was known to have been Divinely appointed to the sovereignty by the hand of Samuel, and who had throughout his whole course of wandering life displayed consummate bravery and prudence, produced a profound impression; and the men of Judah assembled, and anointed David king over the house and territory of Judah.

Having been informed that the men of Jabesh-Gilead had removed and buried the mangled bodies of Saul and of his sons from the wall of the city of Beth-shan, where they had been ignominiously fastened by the Philistines; the first sovereign act of the new king was in perfect consistency with his conduct at Ziklag. He sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, conveying to them his blessing for the kindness which

they had shown to the remains of the late king, and assuring them that the Lord would reward them for this noble and pious act.

While David was engaged in organizing his new dominion, Abner, the son of Saul's brother, and therefore cousin to the departed king, gathered together the wreck of Saul's army, and taking with him Ishbosheth, Saul's surviving son, retired to the country east of the Jordan, where he proclaimed the young prince king over Israel, and made Mahanaim the capital of the new kingdom. But although Ishbosheth assumed the sovereignty over all Israel, excepting Judah, this claim must have been merely nominal; for at this time the Philistines certainly held a large portion of the country in subjection. The place of the last battle was on the south-western edge of the plain of Esdraelon, which was in the heart of the kingdom of Israel, the Philistines having apparently selected the neighbourhood of Jezreel for this conflict, in preference to the more broken and mountainous country of Judah and the north. In possession of this district, while they maintained a military supremacy, there was nothing to prevent their holding in subjection all the neighbouring territory.

In prosecuting further inquiries into the Hebrew history of this period, we have these collateral lines to keep under our observation:—the position of the Philistines in Israel, the reign of David, and the rule of Ishbosheth. David does not appear to have provoked any war at this time: he unquestionably found sufficient employment in the consolidation of his government, and the organization of his army. For some time these three powers appear to have kept themselves within the limits of their respective territories, so that no war of any moment took place

between them; but after the lapse of two years,\* Abner marshalled his forces, and marched to Gibeah, the seat of Saul's family, in the tribe of Benjamin; and consequently where his cause would be very popular. This place, however, was so near to the frontier of Judah, that the placing of an army there could scarcely be regarded in any other aspect than as a menace. Joab was accordingly despatched with a body of troops to observe the movements of the Israelitish general; but apparently with strict orders to act on the defensive. Having so solemnly sworn to Saul that he would not cut off his seed, it is not probable that David felt any desire to provoke a war

\* Few passages in the history have called forth more criticism than (2 Sam. ii. 10) this: "Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years." From the general tenor of the history, it seems impossible to limit his reign to this short period. The entire narrative seems to suppose that Ishbosheth reigned at Mahanaim nearly as long as David did at Hebron. Nor, on the supposition that the text, as we have it, is quite correct, is it easy to say when these two years begin or end. It seems certain that immediately on the accession of David at Hebron Abner took Ishbosheth, and made him king at Mahanaim; and it appears equally certain that immediately on the death of that king all Israel rallied round David: while the long war between the two kingdoms (2 Sam. iii. 1) with all its changes could not possibly have taken place in two years.

The difficulty has been solved by taking the two years here mentioned as the time that elapsed from the accession of these kings to the breaking out of the war between them. It is therefore proposed to read all but the last clause of the tenth verse before the twelfth, thus: "Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon;" the last clause of the tenth and the eleventh verse being clearly a parenthesis. In this view, Poole, Bishop Patrick, and other biblical critics concur.

between the two houses. Besides, it would have been much more reasonable if they had united the two Hebrew armies, and swept the Philistines from every portion of the Hebrew territory.

But this wise course was not taken. As the men of Israel were ranged on one side of the pool at Gibeon, and the servants of David on the other, Abner proposed that a select number of the warriors on each side should engage before the two armies. Joab assented. Abner, apparently eager for the fray, sent out twelve men of Benjamin, and these were met by an equal number of the soldiers of Judah. On meeting, they assailed each other with such deadly determination that they all fell dead together.

The armies then engaged, and a bloody battle was fought; but the men of Israel gave way before the men of Judah, and fled in disorder, fiercely pursued by their enemies. In this rout Asahel, the brother of Joab, who was remarkable for his swiftness, although without defensive armour, followed Abner so closely and persistently, that the son of Ner, having in vain expostulated with him on his folly, killed him. Abner afterwards called to Joab, and requested him to call back his men from the pursuit. He immediately complied; but he never ceased to entertain deadly hatred to Abner, on account of the death of his brother Asahel.

The war thus begun between the two kingdoms continued a long time, but the results were uniform: "David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker." At length Ishbosheth accused Abner of having had intercourse with Rizpah, who had been a concubine of Saul. There appears to have been not only a personal, but an important political consequence attaching to such conduct, among the Hebrews of this time. When Bath-

sheba, at the request of Adonijah, solicited Abishag, who had been but nominally a concubine to David, Solomon's reply was, "Why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also." And for making this request Adonijah was put to death. There seems to have been some connexion, not perceived by us, between marrying the concubine of a deceased monarch, and the laying claim to his kingdom. Had the infamous advice which Ahithophel gave to Absalom, when his father fled from Jerusalem, any reference to a notion of this kind? However this may be, Abner was very indignant at the accusation, and plainly told Ishbosheth that he was indebted to him for his crown and his life, and declared that henceforth he would endeavour to accomplish the Divine purpose, and transfer to David the whole of the Hebrew kingdom, from Dan even to Beersheba. Abner did not intend this to be a mere empty threat, but proceeded at once to put it into execution. He accordingly put himself in communication with David, for the purpose of carrying it into effect. The king in reply declared himself ready to enter into correspondence with him, but positively laid it down as a precedent condition, that Michal his wife, the daughter of Saul, who had, after David was driven from his home, been by her father given to Phalti as his wife, should be restored to him. To secure this object, David sent to Ishbosheth, demanding the restoration of Michal. This king, weakened as he was by continued disaster in war, and also terrified by the threatened defection of Abner, dared not refuse. The execution of this concession was confided to the captain-general, who immediately proceeded to comply with the wishes of David.

The command of the king was accordingly sent to Michal. In charge of Abner, she was taken toward

Hebron. Her husband followed her weeping, until they had passed Jericho, when, at the command of the general, he was compelled to return. This preliminary having been settled, Abner, with twenty attendants, waited on the king at Hebron. David entertained them at a banquet, when the chief promised to gather all Israel, and bring them to submit to David, that he might reign over all the tribes of the Hebrew nation. This being done, Abner retired, to adopt means for effecting the important measure to which he had pledged himself.

Joab, who was absent on a military expedition during this interview, returned in triumph and with great spoil, soon after Abner had left. On hearing what had taken place he was greatly displeased, and reproached the king for his conduct in very uncourtly language, asserting that the purpose of the general was dishonest and deceitful, and merely intended to mislead the king and to obtain information of his state and position. Having thus vented his spleen, he left the royal presence, and, without the knowledge of the king, sent messengers after Abner, requesting him to return. Abner complied, and on his arrival at Hebron, Joab took him aside, as if to speak to him privately; he then plunged his sword into his body, so that he instantly fell dead. This assassination was the plot of Joab and Abishai, and was publicly alleged to have taken place in consequence of the death of their brother Asahel, by the hand of Abner, at the battle of Gibeon. It is probable, however, that other motives influenced them in the perpetration of this murder. Joab and his brother were evidently jealous of the influence which the son of Ner might acquire in the councils and warlike measures of the king, especially if he were the

means of bringing the ten tribes of Israel under his sway. They therefore determined to treat him as a private enemy, and thus to rid themselves of a dangerous and hated rival.

David, for several reasons, was profoundly afflicted at the death of Abner. The murder cast a doubt on the honour of the king. The assassins were the principal officers in his army; Abner was the chief military commander of his rival, the king of Mahanaim; the murdered chief had come to David's court in circumstances which entitled him to perfect protection. Was it not, therefore, very likely that some persons would believe that David had a guilty knowledge of the crime? Wholly innocent as he was, would it not be likely that the friends of Abner, at least, would entertain such thoughts? Then, the great measure which had just been projected between David and Abner, the union of all Israel under the sway of David, and in which the king took the deepest interest, was likely to be delayed, if not entirely defeated, by the loss of such an earnest and influential agent as Abner. And, lastly, David, king as he was, felt himself unable to punish the crime, so that, while denouncing the murder in very strong terms, the humiliating confession was wrung from his lips,—“These men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me: the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.” (2 Sam. iii. 39.) But if David could not punish those who committed the crime, he did what he could. He himself attended the funeral and followed the bier, ordered a general mourning on the occasion, and rigidly fasted the whole day of the funeral. David also delivered a brief but touching elegy over the grave of Abner, saying:—



“Died Abner as a fool dieth?  
Thy hands were not bound,  
Nor thy feet put into fetters:  
As a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou.”

So that all Israel knew that the king had no participation whatever in the death of Abner.

This unfortunate event produced a profound impression at Mahanaim. Ishbosheth had no resources in himself for the management of public affairs. And as, even when supported by the valour and energy of Abner, the power of Israel had been waning for years before the arms of David, how were its cause and interests now to be sustained? No man of spirit and capacity appeared, to fill the vacancy that had been made in the councils and military power of Israel; and universal despondency prevailed. But while some felt patriotic fears for the interest of their country, and others trembled in apprehension for their private interests, there were two men who thought they could secure great advantage by availing themselves of the present crisis. They saw, as others did, that the government of all the tribes was rapidly gravitating toward David; and they determined to precipitate and consummate this change for their own personal profit. Two captains in the service of Ishbosheth, named Rechab and Baanah, came to him when he was asleep in his bed in the heat of the day, slew him, and cut off his head; and, hasting away with it, came to Hebron to David, and presented to him the bloody trophy of their crime. They presented themselves to David, declaring that the Lord had avenged him of Saul and his seed. The king, however, told them that when one informed him at Ziklag that he had slain Saul, thinking to obtain a reward, he caused him to be

put to death. "How much more then," said he, "when wicked men have slain a righteous man in his own house upon his bed?" So he commanded them to be immediately put to death.

The elders of Israel and the heads of the tribes now saw, that the time had come to restore unity to the Hebrew state by investing David with the sovereignty of all the tribes of Israel. They therefore assembled and came to David at Hebron, and tendered to him the government of the whole country. It was on that occasion expressly stated, that this overture was made on two separate and distinct grounds. First, because of his ability and experience in war and government: "Thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel;" and also of his well-known Divine appointment to the throne: "The Lord said unto thee, Thou shalt feed My people Israel, and thou shalt be captain over Israel."

Every tribe was on this occasion represented by its princes, and a body of armed men: so that there were assembled in and about Hebron (for doubtless the far greater number would be encamped outside the walls of the city) about two hundred and thirty thousand men, with above eight thousand priests and Levites; and these, as a splendid representation of the great body of the Hebrew nation, solemnly inaugurated David as their sovereign, by anointing him the third time. He had been anointed by Samuel, and again as king over Judah. Now his original designation by God is confirmed by the unanimous voice of the people, and he is a second time anointed king over all the Hebrews.

How did this vast change, this consummation of his hopes, affect the mind of David? No man had passed through a more severe or extended course of

persecution : he had tasted most of the pains, sorrows, and dangers, to which humanity is exposed ; and by a steady trust in Divine Providence, and a diligent exercise of great mental and physical powers, had worked his way up to regal dignity, and taken upon himself, under God, the government of His people. There can be no doubt but that he regarded himself, in the true spirit of the theocracy, as holding this dignity in entire subjection to Jehovah. It is strongly corroborative of this view, that in the Psalms composed on this occasion, there is not a word of his having attained dignity, honour, or power ; all these are referred to the Lord ; he only speaks of himself as the minister of God, to carry out His will in the government of the people. The first Psalm composed at this time is precisely of this character.

## PSALM CI.

“ I will sing of mercy and judgment :  
 Unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing.  
 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.  
 O when wilt Thou come unto me ?  
 I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.  
 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes :  
 I hate the work of them that turn aside ;  
 It shall not cleave to me.  
 A froward heart shall depart from me :  
 I will not know a wicked person.  
 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I  
 cut off.  
 Him that hath a high look and a proud heart, him  
 will not I suffer.  
 Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land,  
 That they may dwell with me :  
 He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house :

He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

I will early destroy all the wicked of the land ;

That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord."

Thus David marked out the course which he would pursue : he was determined to walk in all purity and justice himself, to rule in the fear of God ; and, to this end, to discourage all vice and wickedness, and to select as his attendants, as far as possible, those distinguished for virtue and righteousness. But this solemn occasion not only led the newly-made sovereign to mark out a way of piety and purity for himself, and to patronize virtue and punish wickedness in those about him : it also caused him to review the whole course of his past life in the light of the Divine presence, and as continually under the immediate inspection of God, who, although men might condemn his conduct, knew and would approve of the purity of his motives.

PSALM CXXXIX.

" O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me.  
 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,  
 Thou understandest my thought afar off.  
 Thou compassest my path and my lying down,  
 Thou art acquainted with all my ways.  
 For there is not a word in my tongue,  
 But, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether.  
 Thou hast beset me behind and before,  
 And laid Thine hand upon me.  
 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ;

It is high, I cannot attain unto it.  
Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?  
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?  
If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there:  
If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there.  
If I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;  
Even there shall Thy hand lead me,  
And Thy right hand shall hold me.  
If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;  
Even the night shall be light about me.  
Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee;  
But the night shineth as the day:  
The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.  
For Thou hast possessed my reins:  
Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.  
I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully  
made;  
Marvellous are Thy works;  
And that my soul knoweth right well.  
My substance was not hid from Thee,  
When I was made in secret,  
And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the  
earth.  
Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect;  
And in Thy book all my members were written,  
Which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet  
there were none of them.

How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God!  
How great is the sum of them!  
If I should count them, they are more in number than  
the sand:  
When I awake, I am still with Thee.  
Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God:

Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.  
 For they speak against Thee wickedly,  
 And Thine enemies take Thy Name in vain.  
 Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee?  
 And am not I grieved with those that rise up against  
 Thee?

I hate them with a perfect hatred :  
 I count them mine enemies.  
 Search me, O God, and know my heart :  
 Try me, and know my thoughts :  
 And see if there be any wicked way in me,  
 And lead me in the way everlasting."

Having entered on the duties of his high station, and cultivated suitable thoughts of his dependence on God, and continual responsibility to him; David, besides his ordinary routine of business, thought of the best means of consolidating the several tribes of Israel into one compact body, and thus giving to the Hebrew people the character of a nation. On considering this subject, the king had questions of great delicacy and difficulty to settle. It is well known that there was almost always a rivalry between the two leading tribes of Judah and Ephraim. The former being David's own tribe, and the seat of his kingdom for seven years, he naturally desired to have the metropolis of his new and enlarged kingdom as central as possible, and at the same time as near to the tribe of Judah as might be, without giving umbrage to the other powerful tribes. Hebron was not only too far north, and badly situated in other respects, but, as it had always been regarded as the chief city of Judah, was open to the strong objection named above.

In this difficulty David, with remarkable foresight and judgment, fixed his attention on Jerusalem.

Although situated in the tribe of Benjamin, the line of division between that tribe and Judah ran close to the city, if not through a part of it. It was capable of being fortified so as to be made almost impregnable, while it was also in close proximity to the southern extremity of the tribe of Ephraim. David determined to make this eligible place the seat of his throne, and the capital of his kingdom. But before this could be done, there was a preliminary difficulty of no small magnitude to be overcome. There had stood on the highest hill of the group, afterwards enclosed within the walls of Jerusalem, an important, and what was regarded as an impregnable, fortress, which was then, and had been for ages, in possession of the Jebusites. This difficulty could not outweigh the enormous advantages which the place offered as the site of the capital of the country. In the judgment of David, the fortress was worth being reduced at any cost; and this judgment has been virtually endorsed by all persons acquainted with the subject from that time to the present.

David accordingly set himself to subdue this formidable fortress. But as the Jebusites had retained possession of the fort for five hundred years, they treated the attempt of David to subdue it with contempt and scorn. Nor need we wonder at their giving expression to such feelings. When, on the death of Joshua, the tribe of Judah, assisted by that of Simeon, proceeded to conquer the land assigned to them by lot, they came to Jerusalem, and fought against it and took it, smote it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire. But the fort was not taken; and so, we are told, "the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Benjamin." (Judges i. 21.)

As the Israelites could defeat them in the open country, and they held the strong fort, which could not be subdued, this was the only course that could have been taken; and it was adopted. So things remained until the time of David.

Now, however, warriors of a different class and character appeared on the field; men with higher objects and grander aims, and more determined and united energy; men who fought not to secure estates and patrimonial inheritances, but to rear up and establish a nation. David, therefore, proceeded to invest this fortress with the greatest energy and determination; but these hostile measures only provoked the contempt of the besieged, who, filled with ineffable scorn, sent him a message, that they would only place lame and blind men on their walls, and these would be quite sufficient to keep out David's army. So full were they of confidence in the impregnability of the fortress. This reproach stung David, and excited in him intense resentment; so that, to call forth the best bravery of his army, he had it proclaimed that the first man that scaled the walls and smote the Jebusites should be chief captain. Stimulated by the prospect of such a prize, a desperate assault was made; when the superior daring and agility of Joab prevailed. He first mounted the walls, and assailed the garrison with such effect, that he was followed by others, so that the stronghold of Zion was taken.\*

\* As the sacred writer, after saying, "The stronghold of Zion was taken," goes on to say, "And David said on that day," &c., (2 Sam. v. 7, 8,) some writers have strangely supposed that two forts, under precisely the same circumstances, were taken on that day; although it is perfectly clear, from the narrative, that the whole passage refers to the capture of this one stronghold. The mistake has arisen from our



Zion, as held by the Jebusites, was not a small fort, but evidently a well populated town of some considerable extent, covering the top of the hill; for on its capture we are immediately told that the king fixed his residence there, and that it was henceforth known as "the city of David." We do not hear of the king having exercised any cruelty toward the remaining descendants of the old Canaanitish nations; but there can be no doubt that on this occasion, after having been treated with so much insult, he expelled the Jebusites from Zion. He would certainly not have retained idolaters in the city of David. Here, then, was a site for a royal residence and court, with every necessary for the further extension of public buildings and offices, as these were required. Here, also, the king could keep himself, attended by his body-guard, and surround his residence with such men of worth, and families of piety and distinction, as might commend themselves to his regard; while the possession of this fortress placed all the lower parts of the city fully under his control; so that from this date Jerusalem rapidly assumed the character of a Hebrew city, and the metropolis of the country.

This acquisition, regarded in all its results and consequences, was the most important event that had occurred in Hebrew history since the death of Joshua.

translating the *vau* which is found in the original at the beginning of the eighth verse by "and," instead of "but," or rather "for." The passage would then run thus: "David took the stronghold of Zion: the same is the city of David. For David said on that day, Whosoever," &c. (2 Sam. v. 7, 8.) This reading not only gives unity and a clearer sense to the account, but strictly accords with the ancient versions. The Vulgate has, "*Proposuerat enim David in die illâ;*" and the Latin translation of the Peschito, "*Dixerat autem David.*"

It not only paved the way for very great and extensive improvements in all the different departments of government; it actually rendered these improvements necessary, and suggested and demanded a grand development of the power and resources of the whole people. And from this date this development actually began.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FROM THE OCCUPATION OF JERUSALEM TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARK ON MOUNT ZION.

DAVID had scarcely established himself at Jerusalem, when he was informed that the Philistines were meditating a serious invasion of his country. He immediately prepared to meet them. The rumour was correct; for he soon found that their host had actually entered the Hebrew territory, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. The precise situation of this valley cannot now be ascertained; but it is supposed to have been somewhere between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Steady to his purpose of ruling in the fear of God, as the vicegerent of Jehovah, David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go up to the Philistines? Wilt Thou deliver them into my hand? And the Lord said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand. And David came to Baal-perazim. And David smote them there, and said, The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters." This simile fixed the name to the place. The Philistines did on this occasion what they believed the Hebrews had formerly done,—they brought their idol-images with them to the field; but their flight from the conflict was so precipitate, that they could not carry them off after the battle; so that David and his men gathered these images together, and burned them.

The Philistines, however, had rested from war so long, and had treasured up such resources, that they would not abandon an enterprise because they had been unfortunate in one campaign. They therefore collected their forces anew, and were again found in the valley of Rephaim. What new course of action they had devised, or what improved tactics, or mode of attack or defence, they had contrived since the last battle, we cannot tell; but it seems as if something of this kind must have taken place. As the two armies had occupied the same positions on the former occasion as now, and the attack was then Divinely directed, and was perfectly successful, it might be presumed that a similar course would again be pursued. But if, as we have supposed, and as appears most probable, the utmost ingenuity of the Philistine chiefs had been successfully employed for defeating this sort of attack, how then must they have been confounded at what followed! David again inquired of God, and the reply was, "Thou shalt not go up," as on the last occasion, "but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines." David was obedient to these directions, and the result was an instant and complete triumph. If there had been any new measures devised by the Philistines, as we have supposed, they would have been rendered nugatory by this new mode of attack; but however this might have been, their defeat was complete, and the routed troops were pursued to the gates of their fortified cities.

David, having secured a suitable capital, and commenced a series of improvements there to make it still

more eligible, and having placed his army in a tolerably effective state, had time and opportunity to direct his attention to the religion of his country, and its influence on the morals, manners, social life, and happiness of the people. On turning his attention to these most important subjects, he must have found the religious institutions of the country in a most unsatisfactory state. The Mosaic tabernacle at this time stood at Gibeon, whither, in all probability, it had been removed in consequence of the massacre of the priests, and the destruction of the city of Nob by the savage order of Saul. But this tabernacle at Gibeon was now denuded of that which had constituted its most essential religious element and chief glory. The ark of the covenant of God, which contained the tables of the law, written by the finger of the Lord, Aaron's rod which budded, and the pot of manna, and which was covered with its lid of pure gold, forming the mercy-seat or sacred propitiatory, over which, and as a part of the same sheet of pure gold, arose the cherubim with outspread wings; this most sacred part of the furniture of the Holy of Holies was not at this time in the tabernacle. Although it was regarded as identical with the Divine presence, it was absent. This had been the case since the death of Eli. Throughout the whole of the administration of Samuel and the reign of Saul, this sacred sanctuary was the seat and centre of Hebrew worship, but its services could not have been complete. Even on the great Day of Atonement, the high priest might go within the vail, but the blood of sacrifice could not be sprinkled on the mercy-seat. The glorious shekinah could not shine forth in approval of faithful sacrifice: the dying lamentation of the wife of Phinehas was still, as applied to this sanctuary, true in all its fearful weight and power; and it

might be regarded as bearing on its front the inscription, *Ichabod*,—"The glory is departed."

This state of things was altogether without precedent in the darkest days of Israel's history. God commanded Moses to erect a tabernacle, and gave him a plan of all its details, and all its furniture; and this tabernacle was to be the centre of Divine worship; here the morning and evening sacrifices were offered; to this place all other sacrifices were to be brought; the monthly and annual feasts were to be celebrated at this spot: in a word, all the extensive and elaborate ecclesiastical economy of the Mosaic system radiated from the tabernacle as its common centre. Yet when we come to inquire into the more strict and proper character of this sanctuary, we find that it was not intended as a place of worship for the people; for none but priests and Levites were permitted to enter it. It was specially and particularly intended to be the habitation of Deity,—the dwelling-place of Jehovah. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." (Exod. xxv. 1-8.) "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them." (xxix. 45, 46.) And so, after the Lord had finished his commands to Moses respecting the ark, and the cherubim, and the mercy-seat, He added, "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee, from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Exod. xxv. 22.) This was, indeed, the audience chamber of the almighty God. He inhabited the cherubim, and the high

priests or rulers of the people could come here, in the immediate presence of God, and have their doubts dispelled, their hearts cheered, and their course of duty defined, by direct revelation from Him.

This tabernacle, with its sacred ark and indwelling Deity, served these important purposes in all the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. After the Jordan was crossed, this sanctuary was set up in Gilgal. (Josh. iv. 19.) It seems then to have been removed to the valley between Ebal and Gerizim, (Josh. vii. 33,) and afterwards to have been returned to Gilgal. (Josh. ix. 6.) From thence it was taken and set up in Shiloh, where it was in the days of Samuel the prophet.

It was while the tabernacle was at Shiloh, that the ark was taken from it by the sons of Eli, and carried to the Philistine war. The issue of this movement, however, was very disastrous. The priests were slain, and the ark of God taken, and carried into the land of the Philistines. The God of Israel on this occasion vindicated His own honour. The Philistines were so severely plagued that they sent back the ark of their own accord, with a trespass-offering to atone for their profane conduct.

The manner in which the Philistines returned the ark was artfully contrived, so as to test the presence, or otherwise, of a supernatural power in the care of this sacred coffer. They made a new cart, and took two cows that had recently calved, and which had never borne a yoke; and, placing the ark on the cart, they yoked the cows to it, shut up the calves at home, and waited to see the result: when, lo, the cows, in violation of all the instincts of their nature, left their young ones, and quietly went on the direct way to the territory of Israel; the Philistines watching them as

they went, until the cows stopped at a field at Beth-shemesh, where the people were engaged in their wheat harvest. When the people saw the ark returned, they rejoiced greatly. Levites took it down from the cart, slew the kine, and, breaking up the cart for firewood, offered the animals as a sacrifice unto the Lord.

The Levites having performed this service in the spirit of their vocation, we should have thought that they would have communicated tidings of this important fact to the high priest at Shiloh; and instant measures would have been taken for the restoration of the ark to its place in the most holy sanctuary. Nothing of the kind appears to have been thought of. Immediately after the sacrifice, the ark seems to have been accessible to the common people; and some of these having evinced a profane curiosity by looking into it, the Lord smote many of them dead. Terrified by this severity, the people of Beth-shemesh sent to Kirjath-jearim, requesting the inhabitants of that place to come and take the ark to them. This request was complied with, and the ark was taken thither, and placed in the house of Abinadab, who sanctified his son Eleazar to keep it.

Kirjath-jearim had of old been regarded as sacred, and might have been occupied by Levites, but of this we have no direct evidence. There can be no doubt, however, that the house of Abinadab was a Levitical family. The ark remained there a long time, (1 Sam. vii. 2,) even until the reign of David. We direct particular attention to this important fact. When we consider the serious consequences of the absence of the ark from the most sacred services of the Mosaic ritual; how easily this defect might have been supplied at any time during the administration of Samuel;



and the great zeal of this pious judge and prophet for the exact observance of the law ; it seems that the conviction must commend itself to every serious and reflecting mind, that there must have been some overruling Divine purpose, which called for a temporary suspension of some portions of the Mosaic ceremonial service, and for the accomplishment of which this great and continued innovation was permitted to take place.

While the established institutions of the Hebrew religion were in this state, David was called to the administration of the affairs of the nation ; and after conquering the Jebusites, and securing a suitable capital, he had a fuller and better opportunity to direct his attention to the extension of pure religion throughout the kingdom. Assuming that this was the large-minded and pious purpose of David, how could he have accomplished his object, or have set about it in a manner that would justify the hope of its accomplishment ? He might have returned the ark to its proper place in the tabernacle at Gibeon, and restored primitive unity and completeness to the services of that venerable sanctuary. Or, if he thought Gibeon an unsuitable locality, he could have removed this tabernacle to Jerusalem, and thus have placed all the Mosaic ordinances in their purity and completeness in more immediate proximity with his court and capital. There was another course which he might have taken, either in conjunction with those just named, or as a separate agency. The prophetic institute, as improved and extended by Samuel, was capable of still further amplification, and of a greatly enlarged practical influence on the public mind. In any or all of these ways a revival and extension of religion in the Hebrew nation might have been attempted, and

with the Divine blessing successfully obtained. All these were means commanded by Jehovah himself for securing this grand object; yet none of them were adopted, or if the latter was attempted, it was in a form and manner altogether different from any thing that had been previously done.

The course taken by the king was altogether new and unheard of. He erected on Mount Zion, near his own dwelling, a large tent or tabernacle; and to this tabernacle he determined to transfer the ark of God from the house of Abinadab on the hill at Kirjath-jearim. Having formed this purpose, and made the necessary preparations for carrying it into effect, David composed for the occasion

## PSALM LXVIII.

“ Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered :  
 Let them also that hate Him flee before Him.  
 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away :  
 As wax melteth before the fire,  
 So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.  
 But let the righteous be glad :  
 Let them rejoice before God :  
 Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

Sing unto God, sing praises to His name.  
 Extol Him that rideth on the heavens by His name  
 JAH,  
 And rejoice before Him.  
 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,  
 Is God in His holy habitation.  
 God setteth the solitary in families :  
 He bringeth out those which are bound with chains :  
 But the rebellious dwell in a dry land,

O God, when Thou wentest forth before Thy people,  
When Thou didst march through the wilderness ;  
The earth shook,  
The heavens also dropped at the presence of God :  
Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God,  
The God of Israel.  
Thou, O God ! didst send a plentiful rain,  
Whereby Thou didst confirm Thy inheritance, when  
it was weary.

Thy congregation hath dwelt therein :  
Thou, O God ! hast prepared of Thy goodness for  
the poor.

The Lord gave the word :  
Great was the company of those that published it.  
Kings of armies did flee apace :  
And she that tarried at home divided the spoil.  
Though ye have lien among the pots,  
Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with  
silver,

And her feathers with yellow gold.  
When the Almighty scattered kings in it,  
It was white as snow in Salmon.  
The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan ;  
A high hill as the hill of Bashan.  
Why leap ye, ye high hills ?  
This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in ;  
Yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.

The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thou-  
sands of angels :  
The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy  
place.  
Thou hast ascended on high,  
Thou hast led captivity captive :  
Thou hast received gifts for men ;

Yea, for the rebellious also,  
That the Lord God might dwell among them.

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with  
benefits,

Even the God of our salvation.

He that is our God is the God of salvation ;  
And unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.  
But God shall wound the head of His enemies,  
And the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still  
in his trespasses.

The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan,  
I will bring My people again from the depths of the sea:  
That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine  
enemies,  
And the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

They have seen Thy goings, O God !  
Even the goings of my God and King in the sanc-  
tuary.

The singers went before,  
The players on instruments followed after ;  
Among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.  
Bless ye God in the congregations,  
Even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.  
There is little Benjamin with their ruler,  
The princes of Judah and their council,  
The princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali.

Thy God hath commanded thy strength :  
Strengthen, O God ! that which Thou hast wrought  
for us.

Because of Thy temple at Jerusalem  
Shall kings bring presents unto Thee.

Rebuke the company of spearmen,  
 The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the  
 people,  
 Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver :  
 Scatter Thou the people that delight in war.  
 Princes shall come out of Egypt ;  
 Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ;  
 O sing praises unto the Lord ;  
 To Him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens,  
 which were of old ;  
 Lo, He doth send out His voice, and that a mighty  
 voice.

Ascribe ye strength unto God :  
 His excellency is over Israel,  
 And His strength is in the clouds.  
 O God, Thou art terrible out of Thy holy places :  
 The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and  
 power unto His people.  
 Blessed be God."

David had previously submitted this subject to his principal captains and chief officers, and it became known to the population at large, and was approved by all ; " for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people." (1 Chron. xiii. 4.) So the king collected thirty thousand of his bravest warriors, besides priests and Levites. This procession was grand beyond description. The object of the movement is stated to have been, " to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims." It was the dwelling-place of Deity they were about to remove, and they seem to have been prepared to do this with rever-

ence and solemn joy. The ark was brought out of the house of Abinadab, and placed on a new cart; Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were charged with driving the cart. The procession then moved, headed by the king, the priests, Levites, and others, who chanted the Psalm prepared for the occasion: "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered. Let them also that hate Him flee before Him." "Then the king and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals: and they played before God with all their might, and with singing." Thus they proceeded until they arrived at Nachon's threshing-floor, when the oxen drawing the cart stumbled, and Uzzah put forth his hand and took hold of the ark, for the oxen shook it. The Lord was angry with Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died, by the ark of God. This sad event broke up the whole plan of taking the ark to Jerusalem on that occasion. On inquiry, it was found that a Levite named Obed-edom resided near the scene of the catastrophe; so the ark was taken there, and lodged in his house.

It is not quite clear in what the error of Uzzah consisted. It is certain that the ark ought not to have been placed on a cart at all, but should have been borne on its staves by the Levites, the sons of Kohath. There had been propounded in connexion with this law a solemn caution, which Uzzah ought to have known and obeyed. "The sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die." (Num. iv. 15.) Nor is it unlikely that as at this time the Lord was about to place the ark more fully in the vision of the people than had been before the case,

it was necessary, by an act of severity, to protect it in future from irreverent approaches.

The ark remained in the house of Obed-edom three months, during which time God abundantly blessed the house ; and this fact coming to the knowledge of David, revived his former purpose. With greater numbers and more munificence than before, he determined to make another attempt to place the ark in the tabernacle which he had prepared for it in the city of David. For this solemn occasion several sacred Psalms were composed. The first appears to have been chanted before the procession moved. It supplicated the Divine mercy, set forth the pious purpose of the king, and expressed strong confidence in God.

## PSALM CXXXII.

“ Lord, remember David,  
 And all his afflictions :  
 How he sware unto the Lord,  
 And vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob ;  
 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my  
     house,  
 Nor go up into my bed ;  
 I will not give sleep to mine eyes,  
 Or slumber to mine eyelids,  
 Until I find out a place for the Lord,  
 A habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.  
 Lo ! we heard of it at Ephratah ;  
 We found it in the fields of the wood.  
 We will go into His tabernacles :  
 We will worship at His footstool.

Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest ;  
 Thou, and the ark of Thy strength.  
 Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness ;  
 And let Thy saints shout for joy.

For Thy servant David's sake  
Turn not away the face of Thine anointed.

The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David ;  
He will not turn from it ;  
Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.  
If thy children will keep My covenant  
And My testimony that I shall teach them,  
Their children shall also sit upon thy throne for ever-  
more.

For the Lord hath chosen Zion ;  
He hath desired it for His habitation.  
This is My rest for ever :  
Here will I dwell ; for I have desired it.  
I will abundantly bless her provision :  
I will satisfy her poor with bread.  
I will also clothe her priests with salvation :  
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.  
There will I make the horn of David to bud :  
I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.  
His enemies will I clothe with shame :  
But upon himself shall his crown flourish."

The multitude having been arranged into a procession, and brought under feelings of deep reverence by the chanting of this Psalm, the ark was taken up from the house of Obed-Edom precisely in the manner prescribed in the law. (Num. iv. 2-15 ; Deut. x. 8 ; xxxi. 9.) Having moved six paces, a halt was made, and seven bullocks and seven rams were offered in sacrifice to the Lord. The procession then again set forward, chanting other Psalms, and among them—

PSALM XCVI.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song :  
Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.



Sing unto the Lord, bless His name :  
 Show forth His salvation from day to day.  
 Declare His glory among the heathen,  
 His wonders among all people.  
 For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised :  
 He is to be feared above all gods.  
 For all the gods of the nations are idols :  
 But the Lord made the heavens.  
 Honour and majesty are before Him :  
 Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people,  
 Give unto the Lord glory and strength.  
 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name :  
 Bring an offering, and come into His courts.  
 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness :  
 Fear before Him, all the earth.  
 Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth :  
 The world also shall be established that it shall not  
 be moved :  
 He shall judge the people righteously.  
 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad ;  
 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.  
 Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein :  
 Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the  
 Lord :  
 For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth :  
 He shall judge the world with righteousness,  
 And the people with His truth."

Thus this grand and solemn procession, including the king and his princes, the flower of his army and his most distinguished officers, the high priests, with the other priests and the Levites, arranged in the order of their families and courses, with the ark of the covenant

of the God of Israel, approached Jerusalem. Then, as they began the ascent to Mount Zion, their most sublime hymn was used. After a short introductory stanza this ode becomes responsive, and was sung alternately by the priests and the people: the effect must have been wonderful.

## PSALM XXIV.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof;  
The world, and they that dwell therein.  
For He hath founded it upon the seas,  
And established it upon the floods.

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?  
And who shall stand in His holy place?

He that hath clean hands and a pure heart;  
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor  
sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

This is the generation of them that seek Him,  
That seek thy face, O Jacob!”

Then, as the head of the procession reached the brow of the hill, and stood before the tabernacle, while the priests and Levites, with the ark, advanced, the closing stanzas were chanted responsively.

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates!  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors!  
And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory?  
The Lord strong and mighty,  
The Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates!  
Even lift them up, ye everlasting doors!  
And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory?  
The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory."

Thus the object of the king was attained; "they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it." Perhaps there was never in Israel a higher, more holy, or more general excitement than prevailed on this occasion; and the king took measures as far as possible to render those jubilant feelings permanent. He offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings on this occasion; "and he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as the men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine." This flesh was undoubtedly part of the sacrificed animals, and would, had the company been smaller, have constituted the sacrificial feast; but although not eaten in company, it still retained the same character, and every one of that vast assembly had an opportunity of closing the joyous exercises of this glorious day by a solemn act of devotion. David then "blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts," and sent them away; so they departed every one to his house.

Crowned with glorious success throughout a day that he had begun with much fear; assured as he must have been that Jehovah had this day, in the full spirit of the theocracy, established His residence among His people, and also that the people, in their reverence and faith, had drawn nearer to Jehovah;—full of these joyous thoughts, David returned to bless his house-

hold. But he was ignorant of what had taken place in his family during the most exciting period of the day. As he came across Mount Zion, at the head of the procession, in a linen ephod, divested of all his royal apparel, singing, playing, and dancing with all his might, his wife Michal, looking from a window, saw him, and despised him in her heart; so that when the king reached his house, with a heart full of gratitude and love, to bless his family, he was met by Michal, who, in terms of bitter irony, said to him, "How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids, and of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!" To which the king replied, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than this, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maid-servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour." (2 Sam. vi. 20-22.)

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HEBREW WORSHIP AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARK ON MOUNT ZION, AND THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL WHICH FOLLOWED.

WHEN David placed the ark of God in the tabernacle on Mount Zion, it must not be supposed that he designed to supersede the established order of the Mosaic economy. On the contrary, the great innovation which he introduced, and which was eminently sanctioned by God, was the means of giving a mighty impulse to all the sacrifices and services of the Mosaic sanctuary, and made these more attractive and effective than they had been since the Hebrew occupation of the country. The old Mosaic tabernacle was at this time, and had been long before, at the high place at Gibeon. Before the occupation of Jerusalem, when the court was at Hebron, about twenty-seven miles from Gibeon, the latter place being situate in a thinly-populated district, it may be concluded, that if the periodical sacrifices commanded by the law were regularly offered, it would be all that could be expected. In such a situation, the masses of the people could scarcely be expected to attend in great numbers with offerings unto the Lord.

When, however, the conquest of Jerusalem, and the establishment of the court there, brought the royal city, with a large proportion of worshippers, within five or six miles of the tabernacle at Gibeon, the case became quite altered. Around such a city a large

suburban population would be sure to spring up, so that a distance of five miles would almost disappear ; and the worshipper who came to participate in the worship of God on Mount Zion would, stimulated by the services there to diligent observance of the law, go over to Gibeon and present his burnt-offering or thank-offering to God on the Mosaic altar. A clear knowledge of the positions of those places, and a distinct recognition of their relation to each other, is, therefore, absolutely necessary to our understanding the allusions to Hebrew worship and religion which we find in the Scriptures, from this time forward.

In describing the worship which at this time obtained among the Hebrews, our attention will be directed, in the first place, to that established by David in the new tabernacle. For the celebration of this worship, he appears to have made the most careful and complete arrangements ; and these appear to have been carried into effect with such judgment and zeal that the end was fully answered, without difficulty or disorder. Before proceeding to speak of the manner of worship introduced into this sanctuary, there are two preliminary particulars which claim special notice. The cherubim over the ark were regarded as the recognised seat of the Divine presence. Here, according to God's declaration when He caused the ark to be constructed, was His dwelling-place. Here, not by type or figure, but in sterling reality, the real spiritual presence of the Angel of the Covenant had His seat and His residence. This fact was constantly recognised by David. "The Lord reigneth ; let the people tremble : He sitteth between the cherubims ; let the earth be moved." (Ps. xcix. 1.) But perhaps the most demonstrative proof of this fact is found in the conduct of David when he received a very gracious com-

munication from God through the prophet Nathan. Having heard the glorious prophetic promise, the king's mind was filled with astonishment and gratitude; and we are told, "Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord: and he said, Who am I, O Lord God?" Here it will be seen that there was no shadow of a doubt on the mind of the king, that the personal presence of Jehovah was really here; and under this assurance he spake to Him. It cannot be supposed that David had only just that conviction of the Divine presence which the pious can always have of access unto God. In that case he had no need to have left his house. But here, he of set purpose "went in and sat before the Lord," and spake to Him. Nor was the mind of David less assured on this subject, when driven from his home and the sanctuary of the Lord by the rebellion of Absalom. Then his most passionate lamentation was, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. xlii. 2.) And soon afterwards he again called the same sanctuary the "habitation" of God. (2 Sam. xv. 25.)

Whether the glorious shekinah was at this time visible above the wings of the cherubim, we cannot positively state; but we incline to the opinion that, although it might not always be seen, yet on certain occasions it was distinctly perceptible. There are numerous expressions found in the Scriptures which clearly speak of this glory as having been, on some occasions at least, clearly seen. What else are we to understand by such language as the following, when used by David? While expressing his earnest purpose to seek God, he declares his desire "to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in Thy sanctuary." (Psalm lxiii. 2.) Hence the Psalmist

calls the Lord "the God of glory," and declares "that in His temple doth every one speak of His glory." (Psalm xxix. 3, 9.) And when in trouble, David prayed, "Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant." (Psalm xxxi. 16.) "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth." (Psalm lxxx. 1.) "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." (Psalm l. 2.) These and other expressions seem to imply, that the shekinah glory was at least occasionally manifested in this sanctuary. It is fully admitted that it is now, and has long been, the practice of Christian worshippers, when in happy intercourse with heaven, to use expressions very similar to these, in a strictly spiritual sense. But we think it can scarcely be doubted, that this figurative use of the terms had its origin in the real displays of a visible radiance, emanating from the shekinah, and indicating the Divine compassion and complacency to pious worshippers; and thus affording them a cheering pledge of the Divine favour, protection, and blessing.

There is one other particular which claims brief attention. This ark of the covenant, the recognised seat of the Divine presence, where God dwelt, and whence the brilliant shekinah coruscations of glory shone forth, to cheer and to bless the pious worshipper, this sacred ark was placed in the midst of the tent, or tabernacle. We would not construe this word so rigidly as to insist that the ark occupied the exact centre of the building; but we have no doubt that the expression was intended to state, that it was placed in the large open room, so as to be visible to all the worshippers. We do not find here any notice of a small room, or recess. The terms employed appear to have been studiously chosen, to express the idea of a free and open visible access, by all who worshipped in this



sanctuary, to this seat of the Divine presence. The memory of the fate of Uzzah would prevent any unhallowed familiarity with this sacred shrine. We will not speculate, where no information is given, as to whether any, or what, measures were taken to prevent any error or offence of this kind, or whether the Levites who ministered here had this in their special charge; but there seems no doubt that the ark, the cherubim, and its glory, were placed in the open vision of the pious worshippers.

Having discussed these topics, we are prepared to consider the nature and manner of the worship introduced into this sanctuary. It is not precisely known when the first religious service in this tabernacle took place. From the account in the first Book of Chronicles, it may be supposed that it was held on the same day that the ark was placed there; but this, on a careful consideration, does not seem very probable. The fatigue and excitement of the long march, the numerous sacrifices that were offered by the way, the time and attention that were required to supply the multitude with bread, wine, and flesh from the sacrifices, must have rendered it all but impossible to have had an orderly congregational worship in the tabernacle on that day. We therefore apply to the following day the statement of the sacred record: "Then, on that day, David delivered first this Psalm to thank the Lord into the hands of Asaph and his brethren." This Psalm contains much of the matter found in the ninety-sixth and one-hundred-and-fifth Psalms, and some persons have thought that they were taken and arranged for the temple service from that now before us; but Bishop Patrick is of opinion that David had previously written these Psalms, and now composed one for the service of the sanctuary from them. The

learned prelate also holds that this Psalm was always used, day by day, at the beginning of each service of the tabernacle. However this may be, it was undoubtedly composed for the opening service, and employed in it.

“ Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon His name,  
Make known His deeds among the people.  
Sing unto Him, sing Psalms unto Him,  
Talk ye of all His wondrous works. .  
Glory ye in His holy name :  
Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.  
Seek the Lord and His strength,  
Seek His face continually.  
Remember His marvellous works that He hath done,  
His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth ;  
O ye seed of Israel His servant,  
Ye children of Jacob, His chosen ones !  
He is the Lord our God ;  
His judgments are in all the earth.  
Be ye mindful always of His covenant ;  
The word which He commanded to a thousand  
generations ;  
Even of the covenant which He made with Abraham,  
And of His oath unto Isaac ;  
And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law,  
And to Israel for an everlasting covenant,  
Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,  
The lot of your inheritance ;  
When ye were but few,  
Even a few, and strangers in it.  
And when they went from nation to nation,  
And from one kingdom to another people ;  
He suffered no one to do them wrong :  
Yea, He reprov'd kings for their sakes,

Saying, Touch not Mine anointed,  
And do My prophets no harm.

Sing unto the Lord, all the earth ;  
Shew forth from day to day His salvation.  
Declare His glory among the heathen ;  
His marvellous works among all nations.  
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised :  
He also is to be feared above all gods.  
For all the gods of the people are idols :  
But the Lord made the heavens.  
Glory and honour are in His presence ;  
Strength and gladness are in His place.  
Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people,  
Give unto the Lord glory and strength.  
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name :  
Bring an offering, and come before Him :  
Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.  
Fear before Him, all the earth ;  
The world also shall be stable, that it be not moved.  
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice :  
And let men say among the nations, The Lord  
reigneth !  
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof :  
Let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein.  
Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the  
presence of the Lord,  
Because He cometh to judge the earth.  
O give thanks unto the Lord ; for He is good ;  
For His mercy endureth for ever.  
And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation,  
And gather us together,  
And deliver us from the heathen,  
That we may give thanks to Thy holy name, and  
glory in Thy praise.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever.  
And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord."

David had evidently made careful and extensive arrangements for the celebration of worship in the new tabernacle, and the principal of these are placed on record. It will be found, on careful inspection of these directions, that if they do not state with great perspicuity all the particulars that could be desired, they afford sufficient information to enable us to apprehend the nature of the worship, the manner in which it was performed, and the order of ministers who were charged with the oversight of this sanctuary, and the entire management of its sacred services, with the several duties they had to perform. The account given in the sacred record of the order for the celebration of this worship runs thus: "And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel: Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-edom: and Jeiel with psalteries and with harps; but Asaph made a sound with cymbals; Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God. So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord Asaph and his brethren to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required: and Obed-edom with their brethren, three-score and eight: Obed-edom also the son of Jeduthun and Hosah to be porters; and with them Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest that were chosen, who were expressed by name, to give thanks to the Lord, because His mercy endureth for; and with them Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cym-

- bals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God. And the sons of Jeduthun were porters."

In explanation of this account it should be observed that the ministers placed in charge of this sanctuary, and to whom the entire management of all its ministrations appears to have been confided, were certain Levites, of whom Asaph was the chief, with Zechariah and others to act in concert with him. The term "minister" here is evidently intended to include the entire direction of all the services of this sanctuary. If, for instance, as has been supposed, each morning and evening service was intended to be begun with chanting the Psalm given above, it would be their duty to enter upon this at the proper time, or to provide other Levites to do so. Whatever other portion of worship might have to be performed by other persons would also be strictly under their supervision; and the service of song with which each season of worship closed, would also be arranged by Asaph or his assistants. Hence we find so many of the Psalms inscribed, "To the chief musician."

If any surprise is felt that a range of spiritual duties of so much importance should be confided to Levites and not to priests, the solution is evidently found in the fact that in this sanctuary, as there was no sacrifice, there could be no room for a priest. We hear of no altar being erected in connexion with this tabernacle, nor, after the day when the ark was brought up, when sacrifices were offered along the line of march, do we ever find any notice of a sacrifice being offered there in this worship; therefore there was no room for the intervention of a priest, he would have nothing to offer, while he was not required "to appear

in the presence of God" on behalf of others, as all who worshipped in that sanctuary could do so, each for himself.

The second part of this religious service specified by the sacred writer, was to "record," a term which does not convey a very intelligible sense. We shall be assisted in arriving at the correct meaning intended to be conveyed, by observing that the same word is frequently translated "to remember," and "to call to remembrance." It means, therefore, "to declare unto the people the wonderful works God had done for Israel, (for that is to record,) and to give him thanks, and to extol His almighty goodness, and all His glorious perfections."\* It will be immediately seen what a rich magazine of incentives to confidence in God, motives to a faithful adherence to His covenant, and encouragements to closer devotion, was by this portion of the sacred service opened up to the worshippers at Zion.

What history could compare with theirs for proofs of Divine interposition, on behalf of the nation and of individuals? The ministering Levites would, of course, according to times and circumstances, make ample use of these for the edification of the people, and to lead them to an unlimited confidence in Jehovah. God's fidelity to His covenant would be shown, and all the sorrow, suffering, and dangers experienced by them in all the ages of their history would be clearly proved to have resulted from their unfaithfulness; and thus so many beacons would be raised, warning the Hebrews against the rocks on which their forefathers had been ruined, and encouraging them to a steady devotion to God's covenant mercy.

This reference to national history and public affairs

\* Bishop Patrick, *in loco*.

might have been greatly enlivened, and rendered intensely interesting and effective, by a recitation of individual experience. That this was sometimes done we know, and it is very probable that it was done often and most extensively. As an instance, the ninth Psalm may be referred to; it was composed by David to be sung in this sanctuary; but no one can read it without being impressed with the idea that it appears to be the substance of an address delivered by the author, when with a grateful heart he was recounting the mercies of God. It is very probable, therefore, that it was delivered by David in the tabernacle, before it was set to music.

## PSALM IX.

“I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart;  
 I will shew forth all Thy marvellous works.  
 I will be glad and rejoice in Thee:  
 I will sing praise to Thy name, O Thou Most High.

When mine enemies are turned back,  
 They shall fall and perish at Thy presence.  
 For Thou hast maintained my right and my cause;  
 Thou satest in the throne judging right.  
 Thou hast rebuked the heathen,  
 Thou hast destroyed the wicked,  
 Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.  
 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual  
 end:  
 And Thou hast destroyed cities;  
 Their memorial is perished with them.  
 But the Lord shall endure for ever:  
 He hath prepared His throne for judgment.  
 And He shall judge the world in righteousness,

He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

The Lord also shall be a refuge for the oppressed,  
A refuge in times of trouble.

And they that know Thy name will put their trust  
in Thee :

For Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek  
Thee.

Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion :  
Declare among the people His doings.

When He maketh inquisition for blood, He remembereth them :

He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

Have mercy upon me, O Lord ;

Consider the trouble which I suffer of them that  
hate me,

Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death :

That I may shew forth all Thy praise

In the gates of the daughters of Zion :

I will rejoice in Thy salvation.

The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they  
have made :

In the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

The Lord is known by the judgment which He  
executeth :

The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

The wicked shall be turned into hell,

And all the nations that forget God.

For the needy shall not always be forgotten :

The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.

Arise, O Lord ; let not man prevail :

Let the heathen be judged in Thy sight.



Put them in fear, O Lord :  
That the nations may know themselves to be but  
men."

This piece affords a fine example of "calling to remembrance." It opens with earnest praise to God, and then passes on to recount several instances in which His power had been exerted on behalf of His people with the most happy effects to them, and destruction to their enemies. This is followed by another burst of praise. After which, the speaker refers to his present sorrow, and prays for deliverance, encouraging himself in confidence and hope, because "the Lord is known by judgment," and "will not forget the poor and the needy." The effect which such addresses would produce on a company of earnest worshippers who understood all the allusions, and had participated in some of these deliverances, can scarcely be conceived of by us.

In one of his Psalms, David makes distinct reference to these discourses of his in the tabernacle :—

"I delight to do Thy will, O my God :  
Yea, Thy law is within my heart.  
I have preached righteousness in the great congregation :  
Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest.  
I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart ;  
I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation :  
I have not concealed Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth  
From the great congregation." (Psalm xl. 8-10.)

It will be admitted that the addresses of the royal

speaker must have been numerous, varied, and important, to lead him to allude to them in such terms as these; and he refers to his statement of these deliverances as uttered under a deep sense of duty. God knew the whole case, and that he was so wrought upon that he could not refrain his lips. He held righteousness in his heart, but dared not hide it there, but had fully and freely proclaimed the faithfulness and salvation, the lovingkindness and the truth of God, which he had experienced, to the great congregation. David here must not be considered in his regal character, but as an inspired prophet of God: as such he takes his place among the teachers of his people, and bears witness to the greatness and goodness, the truth and faithfulness of the God of Israel. There were others, undoubtedly more than we know of, who in a similar manner bore testimony for the truth. Asaph, the chief of the Levites and of the singers in this sanctuary, himself the inspired writer of sacred Psalms, has left one such instance on record, which we regard as the basis of one of his Psalms; a Psalm which could scarcely have been composed without some reference to its subject having been made in this part of the public worship; considering that Asaph was himself the man on whom the duty devolved of arranging for these oral communications. He tells us that he had been led to pay particular attention to the prosperity of wicked men; that he perceived they had not trouble as other men, while they had more than heart could wish; that they indulged in pride, practised violence, and spoke wickedly concerning oppression: that these ungodly ones who prosper in the world, and increase in riches, said respecting the Most High, "How doth God know?" From all this the good man was led to conclude, "Verily I have cleansed my

heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Yet, having been led thus far, he perceived that his conclusions must be wrong, inasmuch as they would militate against the righteous providence of God, and the true position of His people. So he felt painfully embarrassed, and found no relief to his doubts and misgivings, until he went into the sanctuary of God. Then light from heaven beamed forth on his mind; then he saw that the prosperity of the wicked was but for a moment, and that they stood on the brink of destruction. Under this inspiration, he felt the glorious privileges of the pious, and exulted in the position God had given him. "I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me by Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My heart and my flesh faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." The effect of such communications on the worshippers at Zion must have been wonderful. But without dwelling on this, it may be observed that the ministrations that could lead to such conditions and experiences must have been richly endowed with spiritual gifts, and accompanied by very gracious influences from the Holy Spirit.

The concluding part of the worship in this tabernacle is thus described by the sacred writer,—“To thank and praise the Lord God of Israel.” This is elsewhere called “the service of song.” Poetry and music have been consecrated to the service of God from the earliest ages. The songs of Miriam, of Deborah, and of Hannah will always be regarded as marvellous displays of hallowed genius, and lofty, impassioned

feeling. And, inasmuch as they all contained addresses to God; they had in them the nature of worship. But where, before the days of David, do we find poetry and music of set purpose and systematically consecrated to the Divine service? We know of nothing of the kind as having existed. Here, however, begins a new era in the history of public worship. David provided a new course of sacred songs expressly for the worship of God in this tabernacle. Some of these have been quoted, others may hereafter be given; but that is not our present object, which is to show the vast importance of the importation of this new element into the worship of God.

Here were men of sterling piety and lofty genius, great wisdom, and earnest zeal, employing all their powers, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to embody chaste, holy, elevating thoughts in the most soul-stirring language, for the edification of the congregation, in this part of their holy worship. The object set before their minds was, "to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel." And to this object they directed all their energies. The song composed for the opening service, which has been already given, conveys an idea of the general character of this portion of the worship performed here. It exhibits pure and lofty thoughts of God, and of His goodness, glory, and covenant mercies to Israel, such as nothing but the direct and plenary inspiration of the Holy Ghost could suggest; and these were expressed in poetic language of the highest order. We only echo the judgment of the best authorities sacred literature has produced, when we say, that the sacred poetry of the Hebrews stands out to this day unrivalled for its chaste, elevated, and sterling excellence.

But in one remarkable and peculiar respect the

introduction of this poetry marked a new era in the history of the Hebrew church. It led the way to enshrining in sacred verse the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, the thoughts and feelings, the supplications and thanksgivings of the people of God. Nothing in the wide range of national affairs, nothing in the whole circle of family or individual prosperity or adversity,—nothing, in fact, that could affect the church of God, as a whole, or any of its members in particular, was beyond the range of the subjects comprised in this service of sacred song; and, dictated as these compositions were by the Holy Spirit, they remain, throughout all time, a living memorial of the joyous, elevating, and effective power which this new element introduced into public worship, and at the same time present a model for the imitation of worshippers in all ages.

It is not supposed that this portion of the service was performed in what would now be called an *artistic* manner. It was, we believe, beautiful in its simplicity: yet there can be no doubt but that it was eminently effective, and conducted with all the science, tact, and ability that the musical attainments of that day could command. Singers were duly trained for this service,—in what numbers, during the early portion of the time of this tabernacle, we do not know; but before the transfer of the ark to the temple, there was a body of four thousand persons prepared to devote themselves in regular courses to this service. (1 Chron. xxiii. 5.) And from the beginning, the singing was sustained by all the force of instrumental music. All the musical instruments then known were pressed into this service, and new ones were devised, so to add to the powerful effect of the hallowed strains poured forth in the praise of Jehovah.

It is vain for us to attempt to realize the glorious

power of this worship. The assembly of worshippers bowing in lowly reverence before the ark of the Covenant, and looking on the glorious cherubim; the opening song of praise; the relation of God's gracious interpositions on behalf of the nation, and of His merciful dealings with individual members of the congregation; the whole closing with the singing of Psalms set to sweet music, accompanied by numerous instruments, and embodying spiritual emotions, desires, and hopes, suited to the state of the assembly: all this must have been calculated to draw the hearts of the people toward God, to bring them under the gracious influence of His Spirit, and to lead to the experience of an earnest, devout, practical religion.

That such was the case we learn from those Psalms which speak of the moral and religious qualifications for communion with this congregation.

## PSALM XV.

“ Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle?  
Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,  
And speaketh the truth in his heart.

He that backbiteth not with his tongue,  
Nor doeth evil to his neighbour.

In whose eyes a vile person is contemned;  
But he honoureth them that fear the Lord.

He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth  
not.

He that putteth not out his money to usury,  
Nor taketh reward against the innocent.

He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”

To the same effect are lines in one of the Psalms already quoted:—

“ Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ?  
 Or who shall stand in His holy place ?  
 He that hath clean hands and a pure heart ;  
 Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor  
 sworn deceitfully.  
 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,  
 And righteousness from the God of his salvation.”

Nor should it be forgotten that the services in this sanctuary were daily services. The appointment of the Levites was, “ to minister before the ark as every day’s work required ; ” (1 Chron. xvi. 37 ; ) and, from day to day, this solemn service was continued, affording to the pious Hebrews means of religious intercourse with one another, and of communion with God. There can scarcely be a doubt but that there was worship of this kind every morning, and again in the evening ; for, when David made arrangements for the worship in the temple, he appointed a service, very similar to those which had been carried on in his tabernacle, to be continued in the temple at those times ; for the Levites were ordained, “ to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and also at even.” (1 Chron. xxiii. 30.)

In the arrangements made by David, he appointed “ Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God ; ” (1 Chron. xvi. 6 ; ) while, in discussing the nature of the worship in this sanctuary, it was shown that as there were no sacrifices offered there, no priestly acts were required, and consequently that there was no place for a priest. A few words of explanation will

remove the apparent contradiction which these passages seem to present. It should be known that God had, by Moses, established by law a means by which all the religious assemblies of the Israelites were to be called together. Two trumpets of silver were commanded to be made, each trumpet of one whole piece of silver. These trumpets were confided to two priests. And the Lord said, "When they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads over the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee." These trumpets were to be sounded also when the Israelites were to resume their march in the desert, but the law was not limited to that period; it was made a permanent rule for convening the congregation of Israel together throughout their whole history. "But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow,.....and the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations." In compliance with this established law, David appointed these two priests to sound the trumpets at the times for beginning these sacred services, which not only gave the people information of the time, but also authenticated these services as having been appointed by legitimate authority. (Num. x. 1-8.)

It was also stated that the services at the Mosaic tabernacle at Gibeon were carried on simultaneously with the worship in the new sanctuary. This was the case, not only as a continuance of the established Mosaic ceremonial, but as a revival and restoration of these services to their original purity. While engaged in perfecting the arrangements for worship in



the tabernacle on Zion, David made special provision for the continuous observance of these sacred rites, and for adding to their power. In a parenthetical clause in the chapter which has been so often referred to, among the ordinances made by the king, we find this appointment: "And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place that was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord upon the altar of the burnt offering continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the Lord, which He commanded Israel." (1 Chron. xvi. 39, 40.) It appears, therefore, that having devised all that was necessary for the worship on Mount Zion, David also renovated and perpetuated the Mosaic services at Gibeon. During the long period that this tabernacle had been neglected, after the massacre of the priests at Nob, and probably for ages before that time, it is very likely that great irregularities took place with respect to the services in this sanctuary. David, therefore, did not simply enjoin a continuance of this worship, but commanded Zadok and his brethren to refer to the statute law, and to be guided entirely by its teaching, that they might "do according to all that is written in the law of the Lord, which He commanded Israel." So that whatever departure from the original purity and order of these services had crept in during the five hundred years which had elapsed from the death of Joshua, all these would be now swept away, and the Mosaic ordinances restored to all their original character and typical efficacy.

These are facts but seldom adequately recognised, although now established by the most abundant evidence. An able writer on the subject thus sums up the case with respect to these two contemporaneous

places of worship : "The capture of Jerusalem, and the erection there of a new tabernacle, with the ark, of which the old had been deprived, (2 Sam. vi. 17 ; 1 Chron. xvii.,) left it little more than a traditional, historical sanctity. It retained only the old altar of burnt offerings. (1 Chron. xxi. 29.) Such as it was, however, neither king nor people could bring themselves to sweep it away. The double service went on ; Zadok, as high priest, officiated at Gibeon. (1 Chron. xvi. 39.) The more recent, more prophetic service of Psalms, and hymns, and music, under Asaph, gathered around the tabernacle at Jerusalem. (1 Chron. xvi. 4-37.) The divided worship continued all the days of David. The sanctity of both places was recognised by Solomon on his accession. (1 Kings iii. 2 ; 2 Chron. i. 3.)" \*

We have henceforth, therefore, throughout the remainder of the reign of David, to regard the Hebrew people as having access to these two places of worship, and as availing themselves of these privileges as far as a sense of religious need operated on their minds. And we have every reason to believe that after a short time this sense of want became urgent and extensive. After the court was established at Jerusalem, there can be no doubt but that the annual Mosaic feasts were well attended ; and on these occasions most of those who came to these festivals, would certainly worship at Mount Zion, in what may be called the Chapel Royal ; but then they would also present their offerings before the Lord in the tabernacle at Gibeon. David refers to this practice both in reference to the Hebrew public, and in his own personal experience. In speaking of the former, he says :—

\* DR. WILLIAM SMITH'S "Dictionary of the Bible," iii., 1416.

“Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:  
Whither the tribes go up,  
The tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel,  
To give thanks unto the name of the Lord.” (Psalm  
cxxii. 3, 4.)

“How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!  
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of  
the Lord:  
My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.  
Yea, the sparrow hath found a house,  
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may  
lay her young,  
Even Thine altars, O Lord of Hosts,  
My King, and my God.  
They go from strength to strength,  
Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.”  
(Psalm lxxxiv. 1-3, 7.)

The one-hundred-and-eighteenth Psalm is a remarkable illustration of David's attendance on the altar of sacrifice at Gibeon. After one of those great victories which God gave to his arms, he returned to offer thanksgiving to the Most High. There appears on this occasion to have been a large concourse of people who accompanied the king in his triumph; and whether they had first worshipped at Zion, although probable, is not certain; but it seems that the whole company joined in the exultant strains of this Psalm, until they arrived at the house of God at Gibeon, when the king said:—

“Open to me the gates of righteousness:  
I will go into them, and praise the Lord,—  
This gate of the Lord,

Into which the righteous shall enter.  
 I will praise Thee : for Thou hast heard me,  
 And art become my salvation.  
 The stone which the builders refused  
 Is become the head-stone of the corner.  
 This is the Lord's doing,  
 It is marvellous in our eyes.  
 This is the day which the Lord hath made,  
 We will rejoice and be glad in it.  
 Save now, I beseech Thee, O Lord :  
 O Lord, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity."

To which the priests responded :—

"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord !  
 We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord."

The king then replied :—

"God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light :  
 Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of  
 the altar.  
 Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee ;  
 Thou art my God, I will exalt Thee."

Afterward the whole company joined,—

"O give thanks unto the Lord ; for He is good :  
 For His mercy endureth for ever."

The sacrificial service then proceeded.

One other instance may be mentioned, in which David alludes to the worship in both tabernacles.

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth :  
 Let them lead me ;

Let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy  
tabernacles.

Then will I go unto the altar of God,

Unto God, my exceeding joy :

Yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God my  
God."

It will be observed here, that while the king speaks of the "holy hill," he mentions not the tabernacle, but *tabernacles*, and then says, he will go unto "the altar of God," which was at Gibeon, while Zion is always spoken of as the "holy hill."

But by far the most important matter arising out of this worship, refers to the moral and spiritual results produced by these religious means and agencies. What was the moral state and spiritual condition of the worshippers who were thus favoured with access unto God by sacrifice, and who were also permitted to come into His immediate presence with prayers and songs of praise? The Psalms of David, of Asaph, and of the sons of Heman may be given as the correct answer to these inquiries. Here, we have the inner spiritual life of the worshippers of this period clearly and fully portrayed. Here, also, we find a complete exhibition of the practical morality which this religion taught and enjoined. It is not intended to attempt giving even an outline of the principal features of this faith and practice: a few of the most important topics may be mentioned.

The true scriptural condition of human nature was known, believed, and recognised. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm li. 5.) "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." (Psalm lviii. 3.) "They are corrupt,

they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Psalm xiv. 1-3.)

The demerit of sin, and the fearful punishment to which impenitent sinners are exposed, were known and fully acknowledged. "God is angry with the wicked every day." (Psalm vii. 11.) "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." (Psalm ix. 17.) "The Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath, and His fire shall devour them." (Psalm xxi. 9.) "He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in His wrath. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." (Psalm lviii. 9, 11.) "The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth. Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." (Psalm xi. 5, 6.)

The duty of repentance was recognised as essential to personal religion, and taught and enforced. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." (Psalm xxxiv. 18.) "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed." (Psalm lxxvii. 23.) "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath: neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for

me. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation." (Psalm xxxviii. 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 18, 21, 22.) "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." (Psalm li. 1-3.) "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." (Psalm cxxx. 1-4.)

The pious effusions of the good men who worshipped in the sanctuary on Mount Zion, as expressed in several Psalms, contain intimations sufficiently clear and distinct of their faith in the atonement of a promised Saviour, and their reliance on it for personal pardon and purification. The following passages afford evidence on this subject:—"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm cx. 1-4.) If we had only this passage as the inspired utterance of

David, it would of itself be quite sufficient to lead us to believe that the prophet-king had a full conviction that a Divine Person was appointed to come to exercise dominion in Zion ; that He would subdue His enemies, crown His people with blessing, and unite in His own person a perpetual priesthood with sovereign authority. But when the references of Christ and His apostles to this scripture are considered, this conclusion becomes certain. For Jesus declared that David spoke this "by the Holy Ghost ;" (Mark xii. 36 ;) and Peter in his discourse alluded to it as a prediction of the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.

When contemplating the redeeming mercies of the Lord in the light of the Divine Spirit with which he was favoured, David expressed himself thus : "Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward : they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee : if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire, but a body hast Thou prepared me ; \* burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do Thy will, O my God : yea, Thy law is within my heart." (Psalm xl. 5-8.)

It is not intended to assert that David had any correct knowledge or clear views of the mystery of the incarnation ; but it does seem that he believed in the coming of a personal Saviour, whose atoning character would accomplish that which could never be secured merely by the blood of animals.

The apprehension, even in an imperfect degree, of this grand truth gave the royal Psalmist a stronger

\* We have adopted here the Septuagint rendering, which is sanctioned by apostolic authority. (Heb. x. 5.)



faith and a higher hope of a real, as distinguished from a legal and ceremonial, salvation, than was common before his day. Hence he prayed, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.....Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." (Psalm li. 1-3, 7.) The mention of hyssop clearly indicates a reference to a great effectual sacrifice; hyssop being the shrub, the branches of which were used for the purpose of sprinkling the blood of the sacrificial victim. (Exod. xii. 22.) "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come. Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away." (Psalm lxxv. 2, 3.) "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plentiful redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." (Psalm cxxx. 3-8.)

Nor were these intense hopes and desires delusive, nor were these prayers and this faith fruitless aspirations after unattainable blessings. The mercy of God which these penitents supplicated, they found. The pardon which they so earnestly sought, they actually obtained. The purity and peace they so ardently desired, they were permitted to realize. And this not

in any doubtful, hypothetical manner, but to an extent which gave them substantial happiness and a confident assurance of the Divine favour.

In proof of this, several portions of the Psalms may be quoted, which speak distinctly of pardon and forgiveness of sin as having been obtained; and many others describe such a transition from deep mourning to peace and joy in God, as clearly to imply the same thing. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered all their sin. Thou hast taken away all Thy wrath: Thou hast turned Thyself from Thy fierce anger." (Psalm lxxxv. 2, 3.) "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.....I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Psalm xxxii. 1, 2, 5.) "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. For His anger endureth but for a moment; in His favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.....Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will thanks unto Thee for ever." (Psalm xxx. 4, 5, 11, 12.) "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." (Psalm

xl. 1-3.) "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth Thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." (Psalm ciii. 1-4.)

It will have been observed that the recognition of the important doctrines given in these quotations from the theology of this period, is not so much declarative or didactic as experimental. It is not the mere assertion of truth that is here exhibited, nor the teaching of doctrine, but a clear view of the operation of Divine truth on the human mind, producing results in precise accordance with the Divine will. Repentance is not here set forth as a duty, or its necessity described as a doctrine; but the penitent stands before us, his heart broken, his spirit contrite; overwhelmed with a consciousness of his sin, he cries earnestly to God for mercy. His mind borders on despair, but he remembers the mercy of God, and he implores forgiveness, and hope dawns in his soul. This is also the character of those passages which speak of the attainment of pardon and the progress of real spiritual life in these worshippers. The soul, crushed beneath a sense of the Divine anger, feels that fearful cloud pass away, and the favour of God, which is life, is realized in its stead. Sorrow is turned into dancing. The penitent sinner confessed his sin, and the Lord forgave him; and he exultingly exclaims, "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness." This is no mere exhibition of doctrine, no statement of duty or privilege, but a real declaration of facts. It states changes which had actually taken place,—the burden

of sin was removed, the peace of God was realized, the blessedness and joys of pardon were actually felt.

There is another circumstance of this religion, which deserves serious attention. It was based on, and derived its influence and power from, the revealed word of God. As the Book of Psalms exhibits the experimental and practical religion of the Old Testament church, so the first Psalm may be regarded as an introduction to the whole Book, by presenting an epitome of its general contents. Regarded in this aspect, its teaching is very important. It speaks with emphatic earnestness on this subject. The inspired author of this sacred poem, in setting forth the peculiar blessedness of a pious man, after showing that he avoided all unnecessary contact with the wicked, states the source and mainspring of his religion,—“ His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.” (Psalm i. 2.) It is scarcely possible for language to express more forcibly the paramount influence of revealed truth as the foundation of all real religious life and godly experience. It represents the pious man as placing his principal attention, his chief delight, in the records of Divine truth; these are the sources of his peace and joy, the foundation of all his hope and happiness, his great delight. It also presents to him an unfailing subject for study, inquiry, and application. To this hallowed teaching his mind looks for guidance and direction during the active duties of the day; and on its principles and promises he rests in devout meditation during the watches of the night.

In another Psalm of David (xix.) there is a still more decided testimony to the scriptural character of this religion. After showing the evidence borne by the most sublime works of creation, and the all-pervading

and all-sustaining power of Providence, to the wisdom and goodness of God, the Psalmist proceeds to say,—  
“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

We will not stay to give an exposition of this important scripture; but, without attempting this, it appears from the most casual consideration of its terms that it ascribes all the power, purity, and happiness of religion to the influence of the word of God, and thus proves that in the purest age of the Hebrew church the will of God, as revealed in the authorized Scriptures, was regarded as the foundation of Hebrew morals and religion; that to these inspired records were ascribed a spiritual unction and power, which by Divine grace effected a real moral transformation of the soul, and made it a partaker of purity, knowledge, and joy. Nor are these solitary texts. Such quotations might be multiplied. David elsewhere, speaking of the pious man, says, “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.” (Psalm xxxvii. 30, 31.) “Thy law is within my heart;” (Psalm xl. 8;) and again, “Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of Thy law.” (Psalm xciv. 12.)

Too much importance cannot, at the present time, be ascribed to this fact. While some among us altogether repudiate the authority of the Pentateuch and the other early Hebrew Scriptures, and others affect to regard them as a collection of fragments written at

different times by nameless and unknown persons, it is of vital consequence to know that pious and learned Hebrews who lived three thousand years ago, and within five hundred years of the time of Moses, with every means of testing the genuineness and authority of his writings in their possession, should have revered them as the "law of the Lord," and have received them as "the word of God."

Although perfectly assured of the soundness of the conclusions at which we have arrived, we are not sanguine as to the reception of the evidence which has been adduced, or of the opinions based upon it, by Christians generally in the present day. The worship in this tabernacle on Mount Zion has so commonly been ignored, and all Hebrew piety been referred to the services and sacrifices of the temple, that in the minds of most Christians there does not seem to be room for any other idea of the origin and progress of Hebrew religion. And this, too, although it is a notorious fact that the temple itself arose out of a pre-existent piety, and would never have been built but for the great religious revival promoted and fostered by the worship in the tabernacle of David.

In these circumstances we are content to look away from all private opinions and partial views, and to call attention from a detail of particulars to one permanent, undoubted fact. The worship in the tabernacle on Mount Zion gave us the greater part of the Book of Psalms. Its worship was so pure, so richly fraught with Divine influence, so unceremonial, spiritual, and holy, and in such exact accordance with all the revealed truth of God, even in its most complete and perfect form, that its hymnology has remained from that day to the present, as the richest exponent of devout affections, and the best guide to gracious intercourse with

God in public worship, that the church has ever possessed. A sanctuary, worship, and religious community which led to such results, deserve to be had in perpetual and reverent remembrance, and must be considered and carefully studied by all who aspire to any correct knowledge of the Old Testament Church.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARK ON MOUNT ZION, TO THE BEGINNING OF DAVID'S GENERAL WAR.

AFTER having made Jerusalem the capital of his kingdom and the seat of his court, and placed the religious institutions of his country in a more satisfactory condition than formerly, so as to afford the people means of worship, and opportunities for spiritual instruction, David directed his attention to those measures which were necessary to his appearing in the character and state of a king.

There were, doubtless, many matters of minor importance, and which are not noticed in the sacred record, but which were absolutely necessary, as preliminary to the exhibition of any regal pomp or royal state. All these were doubtless attended to, as far as opportunity afforded; but there was one requirement which called for resources beyond those which David could command. It was the erection of a stately dwelling, suited to the exalted rank and sovereign sway of the king of Israel. The Hebrews, as yet, had not attained such proficiency in the useful and ornamental arts as to enable them to rear up such an erection. Nor, if they had possessed the necessary amount of science, art, and practical dexterity for such a work, did the country afford suitable materials for the building of an elegant and costly structure.

If this building had been required but a very few



years earlier, it is more than doubtful whether these various wants would have been supplied. While the Hebrews were a collection of partially united tribes, alternately struggling for existence and independence, we have no notice of any intercourse between them and the Phœnicians.

This nation had long been established on a slip of country on the north-west coast of Palestine, and had become the merchants and navigators of the world. Centuries before the reign of David, their manufactures in wood and metal, in weaving, dyeing, and various articles of elegance and taste, were universally celebrated. In the days of Joshua, he extended the limits of the lot assigned to Asher, to the "great Zidon," the parent city of Phœnicia, and the inheritance of this tribe included the "strong city of Tyre;" (Joshua xix. 28, 29;) so that the greater portion of the Phœnician states lay within the territory given to Israel. The wealth and power of this people, however, appear to have prevented them from having been assaulted, although Joshua carried the war even to the walls of Zidon. For when the confederated northern Canaanites made their last stand for their independence at the waters of Merom, and tried to stay the further progress of his conquests in that direction, we are told that he totally routed their army, "and chased them unto great Zidon." (Joshua xi. 8.) In the time of David, this people had extended their maritime commerce to all parts of the Mediterranean Sea, and beyond it, had colonized numerous islands in that sea, and had planted establishments even on the western coasts of Spain. They were therefore wealthy and powerful; but they were a commercial, and not a martial, people. So long, therefore, as the Hebrews were weak, poor, and insignificant, they regarded them as of

no account; but when they were united under David into a compact nation, which had shown its power by chastising the aggressions of the Philistines, and shutting them up within the limits of their own territory, and by the establishment of Jerusalem as their capital had given themselves a respectable position among the nations, the Phœnicians considered it important to stand in a friendly relation to such a people.

There were reasons for this desire on the part of this commercial people. Wealthy, and possessed of vast resources, as they were, they were far from being in a position to provoke a contest with a powerful and martial nation. They would have everything to lose, and nothing to gain, by such a war; while, on the other hand, the narrow slip of territory they occupied was quite insufficient to grow food for the abundant population of their cities, their fleets, and of the numerous islands which they held near the coast; so that a people who possessed a neighbouring fruitful country, who could supply them with corn, wine, and oil, and take from them in return articles of luxury and elegance, and find employment for their artisans and artists, would be an unmixed gain, which these commercial statesmen were not slow to perceive, nor backward to lay hold of.

There can be no doubt that the improved social condition of the Hebrews, after David had established his court at Jerusalem, led them to open a commercial traffic with Tyre, and that by this means the king of that city heard that David wished to erect a splendid residence for himself on Mount Zion. On obtaining this information, Hiram, the king of this Phœnician city, sent messengers to David, offering to supply him with materials and artificers for the erection of the

building. This offer was accepted: and "timber of cedars, with masons and carpenters," was furnished; and the building was begun, carried on, and completed.

From all that we know of this royal residence, it appears to have been a spacious and magnificent edifice. It is said to have been completed in about five years after the removal of the ark to Mount Zion; and by its appliances and splendour placed the kingly state of David in such a position as had never before been seen in Israel. Unlike the appearance made by Saul at Gibeah, Ishbosheth at Mahanaim, or himself at Hebron, David now approached the splendour and magnificence of an oriental monarch.

To support this splendid court, it was necessary that the different branches of government, the prudent administration of justice, and the careful management of all the resources of the country, should be judiciously and efficiently organized. David had begun with the most important element of national prosperity,—the religious institutions of the country; but the other interests referred to, if less important, were still absolutely essential to national prosperity.

Unlike almost every other nation, the Hebrew people commenced their political existence as an army. When they left Egypt, every man above twenty years of age, who was in health, and able to bear arms, was numbered as a soldier. Each man was to take his place in order by the standard of his tribe. Each tribe therefore formed a brigade; and three of these being united together, made a grand division of the whole. And as Ephraim and Manasseh were reckoned as tribes, there were four of those grand divisions, each tribe having its distinct standard and separate commander; while the four grand divisions of the army

were respectively under the leadership of the princes of Judah,—Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan. This arrangement left the Levites to march as a compact body in the centre of the army, in charge of the tabernacle, and all the sacred things pertaining thereto.

Thus the host of Israel came out of Egypt, and in this manner prosecuted its march through the desert. (Num. ii.) Each tribe was further sub-divided into thousands and hundreds. (Num. xxxi. 14.) On the appearance of an enemy, it was usual to select a body of troops for the occasion, proportioned in number to the necessity of the case, the residue remaining as a large body of reserve.

It does not appear that this regular organization was maintained intact among the Hebrews after the death of Joshua. It seems even doubtful whether during the war of conquest waged by that chief this order was strictly adhered to; but, after his death, this whole arrangement, if recognised at all, had little more than a nominal existence. When, in seasons of great extremity under the judges, the people were called to arms, we hear nothing of captains of thousands or captains of hundreds, but the men appear to have rallied around the leader at some appointed signal, or in compliance with some invitation, as their zeal or patriotism prompted them. Indeed, no progress appears to have been made in the military organization of the Hebrews, either in improving their original order, or in adapting it to the altered circumstances of their settled life, from the death of Joshua to the establishment of monarchy.

But although the reign of Saul, so far as we know its history, was of a very chequered character, and terminated in disaster and defeat; and although during the seven years and a half that followed, while the

tribes of Israel were under the administration of Abner, and David was reigning over Judah in Hebron, outward appearances did not promise much in the way of military improvement; great progress was really made. The union of the tribes into two compact bodies, the diligent efforts and influence of a man of military genius and capacity at the head of each section of the nation, with other agencies with which we are but partially acquainted, placed the Hebrews in a better military position for aggression or defence than they had ever been, since they had crossed the Jordan.

It will serve to place this beyond all doubt, and to show the real position of the Hebrew people when David assumed the government of the whole country, if we transcribe the list of the several bodies of men who came to Hebron to offer him the crown of all the Hebrew territory. "These are the numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord. The children of Judah that bare shield and spear were six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war. Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred. Of the children of Levi four thousand and six hundred. And Jehoiada was the leader of the Aaronites, and with him were three thousand and seven hundred; and Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains. And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul. And of the children of Ephraim twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers. And of the half tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand,

which were expressed by name, to come and make David king. And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do ; the heads of them were two hundred ; and all their brethren were at their commandment. Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank : they were not of double heart. And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand. And of the Danites expert in war twenty and eight thousand and six hundred. And of Asher such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand. And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, a hundred and twenty thousand. All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel." (1 Chron. xii. 23-38.)

Although Issachar was only represented by two hundred chiefs, and Judah by a small portion of its forces, here we have a body of armed men, exclusive of the priests and the Levites, of considerably more than three hundred thousand. On this material David had to begin his organization ; and it must be evident, that if this was judiciously carried out, his military force would present a very formidable appearance, and especially so when every male above twenty years of age, not included in this number, might be considered as forming an army of reserve.

One of the most important measures of David in the organization of his army was the selection of a body of two hundred and eighty-eight thousand men as a permanent militia. Twenty-four thousand of these were

called out for active duty monthly, in succession. Each of these divisions was placed under a commander appointed by the king, many of them being selected from the list of David's mighty men. According to the lowest of two accounts given, the whole number of the army was one million three hundred thousand men.

Besides the regular army, David retained the services of the six hundred men who had accompanied him in his wandering, as a body-guard; and to these he added, apparently in a similar capacity, the Cherethites and the Pelethites; but the number and the constitution of this body of troops has not been clearly ascertained. They are generally supposed to have been Philistines; but they appear to have been devotedly attached to David, and to have secured his confidence to a very great extent. The captain of this band was Benaiah, son of the chief priest Jehoiada, who was the representative of the elder branch of the house of Aaron.

Careful attention was also given to all the various sources of income which were the property of the king. An officer was placed in charge of the king's treasures; another had the oversight of his agricultural property; Shimei the Ramathite superintended the vineyards; and another chief had the charge of the increase of the vineyards for the wine cellars. The olive and sycamore trees, the cellars of oil, the herds that fed in Sharon, and the herds that were in the valleys, the camels, and the asses, were each placed under the charge of a separate officer or superintendent. These arrangements show a careful and minute attention to all the property and the sources of finance in the possession of the king. (1 Chron. xxvii. 26-31.)

Other arrangements were made to secure the due

administration of justice. In addition to the judges previously appointed, David appears to have instituted superintending judges, or probably a court of appeal, to which very important and difficult cases might be referred. (1 Chron. xxvi. 29-32.)

Besides all these appointments for the salutary government of the country the king had chosen councillors, in whose sagacity and wisdom he could place confidence. These were Ahithophel, Hushai, Jonathan, David's uncle, and probably Shevah the scribe, Jehoshaphat the recorder, (or compiler of records,) and Adoram the collector of taxes. But although the king looked to these wise men for occasional counsel or advice in difficult matters, it does not appear that they sat in a council to deliberate on state affairs: at least we have no information of any such united action having taken place.

Having completed his magnificent palace, and occupied it, and, by the various arrangements and organizations above referred to, having established himself in his kingdom, he seems to have felt the want of some great work,—some grand object upon which to fix his active and enterprising mind, and to employ his energies and resources. It was not long before such an object presented itself to his mind. Sitting one day in his new residence, contemplating the elegance of its structure, its carved work of cedar, and other ornaments, and looking over the neighbourhood, his eye rested upon the plain, fragile tabernacle which contained the ark of the covenant of God, and where he was accustomed to worship the Most High. He was instantly struck with compunction and regret at the strange anomaly,—the striking contrast between the residence of a king and the house of his God. His heart smote him as he considered this unreasonable disparity; and as soon as he saw



Nathan the prophet, he unburdened his mind to him in the brief but expressive terms :—" See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God within curtains." The prophet appears at once to have entered into the feelings and views of the king, and responded, " Go, do all that is in thine heart ; for the Lord is with thee."

But in this instance the prophet acted on his own sense of propriety and personal judgment, without seeking counsel from the will of God. The king and the prophet, however, were not left long in doubt and error on this subject. That night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, and gave him a prophetic message for David, which is one of the most important revelations in the whole range of Old Testament Scripture. It will be necessary to give this message entire, and to offer some observations on its most important portions.

" Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build Me a house for me to dwell in ? Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes [or judges] of Israel, whom I commanded to feed My people Israel, saying, Why build ye not Me a house of cedar ? Now therefore so shalt thou say unto My servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, *I took thee from the sheeppcote, and have made thee a great name, and I HAVE APPOINTED a place for my people Israel ; and HAVE PLANTED them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more ; neither do the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as before-time, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over Israel, and I have caused thee*

*to rest from all thine enemies.* Also the Lord telleth thee that He will make thee a house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son. **EVEN IN HIS SUFFERING FOR INIQUITY** *I will chasten him with the rod of men, (with the rod due to man,) and with the stripes of (due to) the children of ADAM.* But My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." \* (2 Sam. vii. 5-17.)

This important message contains three distinct parts. First, the reply of the Lord to the proposal of David, to erect a splendid house for His worship, and the honour of His name. Here the Lord declares that He never made such a requirement, and gently intimates a refusal to comply with the king's request. "Shalt thou build Me a house for Me to dwell in?" This refusal is given in stronger terms in the parallel

\* The great difficulty to a correct understanding of this magnificent prophecy lies in the accurate translation of the tenth and fourteenth verses. Our authorized rendering makes the first of these speak of the future, which is known to be contrary to fact; for the Israelites were afflicted again most grievously, and removed from their own country; while the fourteenth verse, which seems clearly to refer to the Messiah, supposes Him to commit iniquity. Both these difficulties are removed by the rendering given above; the words in italics being the version of the learned Kennicott, which was fully adopted and approved by Dr. Adam Clarke, and gives a clear and consistent sense to the whole prophecy.

passage : "Thou shalt not build Me a house to dwell in." (1 Chron. xvii. 4.)

The second part of this message is a gracious enumeration of the blessings which God had given to David. He was taken from the sheep-cote, to be made ruler over Israel. God had been with him in all his way, and had cut off all his enemies on every side ; had made him a great name, which was respected and feared by all the neighbouring nations ; and had so completely secured Israel, in their own place, the country that God had given them, that no children of wickedness dared afflict them as aforetime, and as in the time of the judges ; on the contrary, God had given him to rest from all his enemies. These are mercies which David actually enjoyed, and not predictions of future good, as intimated in the authorized version.

The third part of this communication is one of the most remarkable and splendid prophecies in the whole Bible. The first element in this prophetic promise is expressed thus : "Also the Lord telleth thee that He will make thee a house." Now no one, it is presumed, will imagine that by these words Nathan meant to tell David that the Lord would build him a dwelling, a palace. It is plain that the sense intended to be conveyed is, that God would give to David a numerous household, an extended posterity. In this sense, and in this sense only, was the promise fulfilled. For nearly five hundred years from this time, the direct descendants of David were maintained on the throne of Judah ; and for above five hundred years more, his family and descendants were well known, and distinctly recognised as such, in Judæa :—a clear and ample fulfilment of the prediction.

The prophecy proceeds thus : "And when thy days

be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name." These words have been generally applied to Solomon, in their original sense and application, with an ulterior reference to Messiah. But whatever reason there may be in other passages of Scripture to contend for a double meaning of prophecy, a careful examination of the terms of this text will show that there is no room for anything of the kind here; that these words do not at all, in any way, refer to Solomon, but entirely and exclusively to Christ. What does the prophet, in the name of the Lord, say? "When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee." Was this the case with Solomon? On the contrary, he was invested with the royal dignity in David's life-time, and by David himself. As Dr. Kennicott observes, the "words clearly exclude Solomon, who was set up and placed upon the throne before David was dead." The words do not seem to apply to any immediate son of David; the terms, "thy seed after thee," would rather refer to some remote descendant: and this seems to have been the sense in which David himself understood the communication; for he says, "Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come." It is therefore clear that the words of the prophet do not in any degree refer to Solomon. This leads to the observation, that the marvellous providence of God over all the affairs of the Hebrew nation was at the same time most comprehensive and minute. In this instance, the hasty ambition of Adonijah, the zeal of Nathan, the motherly solicitude of Bathsheba, and the promptitude of king David, were all over-ruled in placing Solomon, as it

were prematurely, on the throne; to prevent this important prophecy from being diverted from its real object, the Messiah, to Solomon.

But it is said of this seed of David, "I will establish his kingdom, and he shall build me a house; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever: I will be his Father, and he shall be My son." It has been shown that when God promised to build David a house, He did not mean a material erection, but a numerous and long-enduring posterity. So, when the Lord says, "He shall build me a house," the reference is not to the temple, but to a living house of redeemed men. But let us look carefully at the several clauses of the text. What character is ascribed to this son or seed of David? God says, "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son." And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews selects this text among others to prove the Divinity of Christ. The manner in which he introduces this is worthy of serious observation. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son?" God never put angels on this level, much less the children of men. This language, therefore, by the inspired authority of the New Testament, as well as by the force of the words employed, can apply to Christ alone; and the kingdom which God promised "to establish," to "establish for ever," is the kingdom of Christ. This is the first time this glorious revelation was made to mankind, but we never find an end of it. The whole Scripture, from this point to its close, is full of this grand truth. The Son of David was to be Messiah, the Son of God. The kingdom of David, to whatever earthly casualties it might be subjected, however torn by faction, or

crushed by judicial infliction through the sins of its people, was ultimately to merge into the kingdom of Christ, was to be established in His hand,—established for ever.

The best proof that we correctly render a prophecy is found in the fact, when we have the means of testing it, that it is fulfilled in the precise sense in which it was explained. Those who persist in applying this prophecy to Solomon, are deprived of this advantage. His kingdom in its entirety only lasted to the end of his life; and then, after lingering through centuries of decay, was at length trodden into the dust by the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, until at length the humiliating confession was extorted, "We have no king but Cæsar." But then, if this prophecy be applied to Christ, all this difficulty is removed; and we have a clear, full, and complete fulfilment of the prediction in the development of the Gospel. When the angel announced to the virgin the birth of Jesus, he said, "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." It is to this point that the most glorious revelations of Isaiah, and the marvellous prophecies of Daniel, converge. This is the kingdom which God was to set up on the earth; the kingdom which the Baptist announced; the kingdom which was the burden of the Saviour's ministry, and which was set up in Him, and which, from that day to this, is represented by the Gospel church, over which Christ reigns as the Mediator King in Zion. In this kingdom there is to be no

change of dynasty, no transfer of the sceptre from one line to another, as was the case in respect to Saul; for Christ was to be an everlasting King, and to reign for ever.

The next element of the prophecy is that "he shall build a house for My name." As, when the Lord said He would make David a house, it is clear that a lineage of living persons, and not a material erection, was meant, so it is fairly to be presumed that this house which was to be built for the name of the Lord was also to be a fraternal association of redeemed men. And this is the interpretation given to this text. "Now that this house or spiritual building was to be set up, together with a kingdom by the Messiah, is clear from Zechariah, who very emphatically says (vi. 12, 13):—'Behold the Man whose name is the Branch; He shall build the temple of the Lord: even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne,' &c. Observe also the language of the New Testament: in 1 Cor. iii. 9-17, St. Paul says, 'Ye are God's building.....Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?... ..The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to have his eye on this very promise in Samuel, concerning a Son of David, and of the house which He should build; when he says, (iii. 6,) 'Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we.'"

But the most important corroboration of these views of this prophecy is afforded by Dr. Kennicott's emendation of the translation of the fourteenth verse, which, as he has rendered it, can refer to none but the Messiah. "Even in his suffering for iniquity I will chasten him with the rod of men, (with the

rod due to men,) and with the stripes of (due to) the children of Adam. But My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever." This seed of David, this Son of God, is doomed to suffer for iniquity, to bear the rod, the Divine punishment due to men, and the stripes due to the children of Adam. How nearly does this wonderful prophecy resemble the graphic prediction of Isaiah! "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah liii. 4, 5.) Yet, as all this suffering was vicarious, the mercy, the favour, the complacency of God shall not be removed from His Son. His kingdom shall not be wrested from His hand, but established, and through the merit of these very sufferings be confirmed unto Him for ever.

We see here the several distinct revelations made to David in this wonderful prophecy. He was forbidden to carry out his purpose of building a costly temple for the honour of Jehovah: he was then reminded that the Lord had raised him from the sheep-cote to the throne of Israel, had made him a great name in the earth, and had given him such power that no enemy dared to molest him or his people, as had formerly been the case. At the same time, he was assured that the Lord would build him a house by giving him a numerous lineage, an extended posterity, which should remain for a long time rulers over Israel. Then follow more vitally important revelations. David was told that after his



death a seed or son of his should arise, who should be in reality also the Son of God; that this Divine person would build a house for the glory of God, and succeed to the kingdom of his father David. And as David was here taught that this Divine person should suffer vicariously for iniquity, and bear the stripes due to the children of Adam, it is not improbable that it was on this occasion that he learned the unsatisfactory character of merely animal sacrifice, and the purpose of God to provide a better offering for the transgressions of mankind. "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire, but a body hast Thou prepared me: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God." (Psalm xl. 6-8; Heb. x. 5.)

It will not excite surprise to say that the king felt profoundly affected by this communication. He immediately went into the tabernacle, and "sat before the Lord: and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" He then acknowledged the Divine goodness to the Hebrew nation in their deliverance from Egypt, and their being taken under the immediate protection of God. But the most interesting part of this address to the Lord is that which refers to the blessings promised to David and his family. Here the mind of the king is evidently oppressed with his emotion; and his language is consequently abrupt, full of wonder, and abounding in repetitions. "And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto Thee? For Thou, Lord God, knowest Thy servant,

For Thy word's sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou done all these great things, to make Thy servant know them." On this address, Kennicott remarks, "From David's address to God, after receiving the message by Nathan, it is plain that David understood the son promised to be the Messiah, in whom his house was to be established for ever. But the words which seem most expressive of this sense, are in this verse now rendered very unintelligibly: 'And is this the manner of man?' Whereas the words literally signify: 'And this is (or must be) the law of the man, or of Adam;' that is, this promise must relate to the *law* or ordinance made by God to Adam, concerning the seed of the woman." Dr. Adam Clarke adds, as the king's conclusion from all this, "From my line shall Messiah spring, and be the spiritual and triumphant King, for ever and ever." Having apprehended this, as the purport of the Divine communication, well might he exclaim, "What can David say more?"

We have given the sense of this prophecy at length, as it was communicated to the royal prophet: it may now be desirable to show the important additional information which it gave to him respecting the world's Redeemer, and also the further light which it sheds on Messianic prophecy in general. The human nature of the Saviour had been declared to be the seed of the woman, a Son of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob,—then of Judah; and now, and finally, the line of descent is limited to David, and as such He is announced in the Gospel, "Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham." (Matt. i. 1.) The Messiah is here also explicitly declared to be the Son of God. This is the first time this relationship is mentioned in the Scriptures respecting the Messiah. This is a most import-

ant circumstance, and marks a great development in Messianic prophecy; and is re'erred to in the text already quoted from St. Paul, as setting forth the supreme dignity of the Redeemer's person. Further, this prophecy declared the Messiah to be a king. The appellation "Shiloh," given by Jacob to the promised Saviour, might obscurely indicate His regal dignity, but this is now explicitly announced. And, lastly, this kingdom of Messiah is said to be an extension and perpetuation of the kingdom of David, which the angel declared to the Virgin should be fulfilled in Christ, almost in the very words of this prophecy.

After receiving this prophetic message, and acknowledging the Divine goodness before the Lord in his tabernacle, David composed the second Psalm, which still further shows the effect produced on his mind by these great and important revelations.

## PSALM II.

" Why do the heathen rage,  
 And the people imagine a vain thing?  
 The kings of the earth set themselves,  
 And the rulers take counsel together,  
 Against the Lord, and against His Anointed, say-  
 ing,  
 Let us break their bands asunder,  
 And cast away their cords from us.  
 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh :  
 The Lord shall have them in derision.  
 Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath,  
 And vex them in His sore displeasure.  
 Yet have I set my King  
 Upon my holy hill of Zion.  
 I will declare the decree :

The Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son ;  
This day have I begotten Thee.  
Ask of Me,  
And I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance,  
And the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.  
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ;  
Thou shalt dash them in pieces, like a potter's vessel.

Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings !  
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth !  
Serve the Lord with fear,  
And rejoice with trembling.  
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,  
And ye perish from the way,  
When His anger is kindled but a little.  
Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

It seems, from the beginning of this Psalm, and the long series of wars in which David was soon after engaged, (2 Sam. viii.,) that the neighbouring nations were actually forming combinations of their military power for the purpose of crushing the rising greatness of Israel, which was now sufficiently prominent to excite their jealousy and apprehension. The Psalm opens with a reference to this: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Assured by the gracious communication of God by Nathan, David regards all these efforts of his enemies as the struggles of sheer imbecility. The Lord had promised him a continued kingdom, and He would have in derision all who attempted to arrest the progress of

His will. But this is not the most important ground of David's confidence. God had declared His purpose, made a decree that His Son should reign in Zion, and exercise an everlasting dominion. So David regarded his kingdom as preliminary and introductory to the kingdom of Messiah, and therefore as invincible against all the efforts of its enemies. The psalmist then counsels universal submission to this all-powerful Potentate as the only means of escape from danger and ruin. This Psalm recognises all the particulars of the revelation made through Nathan; and, in one respect, goes beyond them. The additional light which had by this means shone on the mind of David, gave him to see that the kingdom of Messiah should not only be everlasting, but universal. The heathen were to be given to Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

For about seven years after the capture of Zion, with the exception of a short war with the Philistines, David enjoyed undisturbed peace. Now, however, the combination of his enemies, previously mentioned, had assumed such a serious aspect, that he felt called upon to arrest its progress by a vigorous aggression on those of the parties to this military alliance who were nearest to his country, and who possessed the most effectual means of harassing him, if other nations assailed him. It is also possible that, although these circumstances might have induced David to prepare for war, other and higher motives might have led him into actual conflict. He well knew that God had promised to Israel the sovereignty of all the countries, from the Nile to the Euphrates; and from the revelations he had recently received, he could not but regard himself as the legitimate representative of the Hebrew people, and, as such, under obligation to secure all the terri-

tory which God had promised to his people. His action, therefore, in the war which immediately ensued, was simply a claim to possess what God had promised to his people, and to extend the dominion of Israel as far as God had promised that that dominion should extend.

## CHAPTER X.

### FROM THE BEGINNING OF DAVID'S GENERAL WAR TO THE RUPTURE WITH THE AMMONITES.

AFTER receiving the message from God through Nathan, David felt as no other monarch could feel. He must have been deeply impressed with the assurance that the throne of Israel would remain in the possession of his family, until one of his sons, who should also be the Son of God, would, as the promised Messiah, succeed to the sovereignty, and establish a universal and everlasting kingdom, and thus carry into full accomplishment the grand purpose of God in the redemption of the world.

With such an exhibition of the inner life of David, it is difficult to follow his martial career. Here is a man in intimate covenant relation to God, reigning over all the tribes of Israel by His direct appointment, and charged with the subjugation of all the surrounding countries, as a religious duty, proceeding to accomplish this task under the assured conviction that his kingdom was destined to be the precursor of the universal and perpetual kingdom of the Messiah. And this assurance, it should be remembered, was not a wild, fanatical notion, nor the result of a disordered imagination, but a conviction arising out of a clearly announced revelation from God. It is utterly impossible to realize the actual position of this king, and to estimate his actions aright, without fully recognising this truth.

From these spiritual exercises in the privacy of his palace, and of the sanctuary of his God, David was called to the dangers and duties of war. The combination of opposing powers, of which he had spoken in the second Psalm, had progressed so far as to render it necessary for him to act before it had acquired overwhelming force. He accordingly selected the old hereditary foes of Israel—the Philistines—as the first who claimed his attention. These he completely subdued. He took and occupied Gath, the metropolitan city; and there can be no doubt but that he placed a garrison there. Much diversity of opinion has been called forth, by the appellation given to this place, 2 Sam. viii. 1, where it is called *Metheg-ammah*; a phrase which, in the parallel passage, is rendered, “Gath and her towns.” (1 Chron. xviii. 1.) The Vulgate renders this by a phrase which signifies, “the bridle of bondage.” It seems, that Gath, being a strongly-fortified city on the Mount Ammah, near the Philistine frontier, was made the means of holding the neighbouring Hebrew territory in subjection; but David, having defeated the Philistine forces in the field, and made himself master of this important fortress, was able to make it serve the same purpose for the Hebrews it had hitherto supplied to the Philistines, and by its means to retain the Philistines in subjection.

It is worthy of remark, that in those times we never hear of a conquered territory being absorbed into the kingdom of the conquerors. This practice was scarcely heard of before the reign of Cyrus of Persia, who appears to have been the first monarch who, in its full meaning, conceived the idea of an empire. Before his time, a conquered country would be subjected to tribute; and usually the conquered sovereign, or some member of his family, would be intrusted with the



government of the country, as a tributary king. It is more than probable that this policy was adopted by David in this case, as we hear of a king of Gath in the time of Solomon. (1 Kings ii. 39.) The complete success of this war was most important, as, all the country to the west of the Jordan being completely under his government, he had an unbroken base for any operations he might carry on to the eastward. It was, indeed, in this direction only that his dominion could be further extended.

The next war in which the king of Israel was engaged, was with the Moabites. This people was located on the southern part of the high table land, lying to the east of the Dead Sea. Their country was admirably situated for defence, having on all its sides a frontier capable of being rendered almost impregnable. The account of this war is recorded in a single verse. "And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts." (2 Sam. viii. 2.) The account given in the parallel passage is still more brief. "And he smote Moab, and the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts." (1 Chron. xviii. 2.) The obscurity of this language has led to various speculations, some puerile, and others absurd. It has been conjectured that David caused two-thirds of the Moabitish population to be put to death; but it seems much more probable that Josephus has given a correct account of the case, however difficult it may be to elicit precisely the same sense from the language employed by the sacred writer. This Hebrew historian says that David "transferred the war to the Moabites; and when he had overcome

two parts of their army in battle, he took the remaining part captive, and imposed tribute upon them."\* There can be no doubt that the Moabites were completely subdued, subjected to tribute, and brought fully under the power of the Hebrews.

These wars were important, as reducing to subjection powerful tribes, in immediate proximity to the Hebrew nation; but they were comparatively easy achievements. The Philistines were a brave and martial nation; but neither their population nor resources enabled them to compete with the Hebrews, when united in a compact body, under an able leader like David. And the same may be said of the Moabites. But these preliminary conflicts being ended, the king of Israel entered on a war of such magnitude, as would call forth all the abilities of a great statesman, all the energy of an able general, and tax to the uttermost the resources of the Hebrew nation.

There can be little doubt that David entered on this war under the influence of a strong faith in God. The Hebrews held possession of their country, not by the natural right of aboriginal inhabitants, nor by international treaties or conventions, but by the direct gift of God. And this Divine appointment was not, as has been already intimated, limited to the territory usually called Canaan, but extended far beyond it. The grant familiar to the mind of David was of ancient date, but was given in very explicit terms. "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." (Gen. xv. 18.) This David regarded as his title to the great range of territory so described,

\* Antiquities, vii., 5, 1.

and felt himself called on to assert his claim to its entire sovereignty.

But the country lying to the east of Canaan, and between it and the Euphrates, was occupied by several powerful nations, more or less united to each other, and presenting an aspect of the most formidable resistance to any invader. David saw, however, that these must be subdued, before the promise made to the father of the faithful could be fully realized by his descendants; and great as was this enterprise, and, to all human calculation, desperate as was the undertaking, the son of Jesse was determined to secure to his country the full and complete possession of all that was included in the Divine grant.

On entering upon this grand enterprise, David first turned his arms against Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah. It is not easy to state the limits of this king's authority, but he appears to have reigned over a vast range of territory, lying chiefly eastward of Cœle-Syria, and extending from thence north-east and east probably to the banks of the Euphrates. He was a powerful sovereign, and lived in friendly intercourse with the king of Damascus, and exercised supremacy over several Syrian princes, who ruled over different parts of the country. (2 Sam. x. 16, 19.) At this time this powerful prince was taking measures for strengthening his position on the Euphrates; \* and David, having regard to the Divine promise, saw it

\* There is great difficulty as to this statement. (2 Sam. viii. 3.) It has been doubted whether the words refer to Hadadezer or to David; but there seems no reason for supposing that at this period the king of Israel had carried his arms so far eastward. The presumption, therefore, is that the king of Zobah was forming some new alliance or military combination in this quarter, which David found it necessary to prevent or defeat.

necessary to hinder the accomplishment of this purpose. The measures taken by the Hebrew king issued in a great battle, in which Israel was completely successful. David took a thousand chariots, seven hundred horsemen, and twenty-two thousand footmen. (2 Sam. viii. 4.) Such a triumph at so great a distance from his own country proved at once the spirit, the generalship, and the resources of the king of Israel. This blow appears to have been decisive; the power of the king of Zobah was broken.

But those powers which had formerly been in alliance with Hadadezer, now felt it necessary to make an effort to repair the loss sustained by their ally, and to prevent a similar blow falling on themselves. The Syrians of Damascus did so. They marched an army against the victorious Hebrews; but the effort was vain. David met them in battle, and inflicted on them a defeat so severe that they left twenty-two thousand men dead on the field. This so completely crippled their power that they were compelled to place themselves in entire submission to David, and even to receive a Hebrew garrison into Damascus. (2 Sam. viii. 5, 6.)

The effect of these campaigns was not only to extend the power and military fame of David, but to enrich him with a vast amount of spoil. Hadadezer was the first prince of whom we have heard as guilty of the absurd display of wealth by arming his servants with shields of gold. These David captured, and brought in triumph to Jerusalem. From several cities also, formerly under the government of this king, David took vast quantities of brass. Toi, king of Hamath, who had formerly been at war with Hadadezer, gratified at the defeat of his powerful foe, sent his son to congratulate David on his success, and by him presented to the Hebrew king vessels of gold,

and silver, and brass. All these went to increase the amount of spoil taken on this occasion. (2 Sam. viii. 9-12.)

Returning to his capital in triumph, burdened with the spoils of these conquered nations, David did not forget Him through whom he had obtained all this glory and success; and he felt determined to acknowledge his dependence on Divine Providence, and to do so on entering into his capital on his return to Jerusalem. For this purpose he composed the following spirited hymns:—

## PSALM XCVII.

“The Lord reigneth : let the earth rejoice ;  
Let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

Clouds and darkness are round about Him :  
Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of  
His throne.

A fire goeth before Him,  
And burneth up His enemies round about.  
His lightnings enlightened the world :  
The earth saw, and trembled.  
The hills melted like wax at the presence of the  
Lord,

At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.  
The heavens declare His righteousness,  
And all the people see His glory.  
Confounded be all they that serve graven images,  
That boast themselves of idols :  
Worship Him, all ye gods.

Zion heard, and was glad ;  
And the daughters of Judah rejoiced  
Because of Thy judgments, O Lord.

For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth :  
Thou art exalted far above all gods.

Ye that love the Lord, hate evil :  
He preserveth the souls of His saints ;  
He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.  
Light is sown for the righteous,  
And gladness for the upright in heart.  
Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous ;  
And give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

## PSALM XCVIII.

" O sing unto the Lord a new song ;  
For He hath done marvellous things :  
His right hand, and His holy arm,  
Hath gotten Him the victory.  
The Lord hath made known His salvation :  
His righteousness hath He openly showed in the  
sight of the heathen.  
He hath remembered His mercy and His truth  
Toward the house of Israel :  
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of  
our God.

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth :  
Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.  
Sing unto the Lord with the harp ;  
With the harp, and the voice of a Psalm.  
With trumpets and sound of cornet  
Make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.  
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof ;  
The world, and they that dwell therein.  
Let the floods clap their hands ;  
Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord ;  
For He cometh to judge the earth :

With righteousness shall He judge the world,  
And the people with equity."

It is scarcely possible for us to realize the effect which would be produced on the inhabitants of Jerusalem by the return of the king at the head of his victorious army, laden with gold and silver, and precious booty of all kinds ; and, while these inspired songs were being chanted, the king, his generals, and soldiers going into the sanctuary of God to return Him their thanksgiving, and dedicating the spoils to the service of the Most High. We have considered well the military glories of Greece, have reviewed the gorgeous triumphs of Rome ; but where in all history shall we find a scene like this? When the air was rent with the acclamation,—

"Zion heard, and was glad ;  
And the daughters of Judah rejoiced  
Because of Thy judgments, O Lord.  
For Thou, Lord, art high above all the earth :  
Thou art exalted far above all gods."

Here was a true, hearty, thankful recognition of God, as the God of the whole earth, crowning His elect people with blessings ; and this people shouting His praises, and glorying in His saving power.

It is very difficult to carry on the history of David from this point. As far as can be ascertained, he was soon afterward, and for a considerable time, engaged in a series of severe and obstinately contested wars : but our direct information is so scanty that it is almost entirely comprised in one short paragraph of the sacred record, and the inscription to the sixtieth Psalm. From this latter source, we learn that the

Psalm was written when David "strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand." The explanation of this is easily given. Aram is the Hebrew name for Syria, and Naharaim signifies "the two rivers;" and this was the name given to the country lying between the two great rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, or Mesopotamia. Aram-Zobah refers to the Syrians of Zobah, the country of Hadadezer. The account of this war given in the sacred narrative is, that "David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men. And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went." (2 Sam. viii. 13, 14.) The parallel passage reads thus:—"With the silver and the gold that he brought from all these nations; and from Edom, and from Moab, and from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines, and from Amalek. Moreover Abishai, the son of Zeruah, slew of the Edomites in the valley of salt eighteen thousand men. And he put garrisons in Edom: and all the Edomites became David's servants. Thus the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went." (1 Chron. xviii. 11-13.)

From the whole of these fragments of information, it has been concluded that after the close of the war in which David so effectually humbled the Syrians, and secured such immense spoils, the Syrians of Zobah, having formed an alliance with those of their race beyond the Euphrates, and drawn Edom into the military combination, renewed the war with Israel, making Edom, one of the most defensible countries in



the world, their base of operations. This war appears to have taxed David's resources to the utmost, and more than once placed him in great danger. The conflict, indeed, appears to have been very protracted, and its issue for a long time doubtful, although the Hebrew arms were ultimately crowned with complete success.

We may learn something of the nature, object, and difficulty of this struggle from the Psalms which were written while it was pending. That which bears the inscription given above may be first cited.

## PSALM LX.

“O God, Thou hast cast us off, Thou hast scattered us ;  
 Thou hast been displeased ; O turn Thyself to us again.  
 Thou hast made the earth to tremble ; Thou hast broken it ;  
 Heal the breaches thereof ; for it shaketh.  
 Thou hast showed Thy people hard things :  
 Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.  
 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee,  
 That it may be displayed because of the truth.  
 That Thy beloved may be delivered ;  
 Save with Thy right hand, and hear me.

God hath spoken in His holiness ;  
 I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem,  
 And mete out the valley of Succoth.  
 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine ;  
 Ephraim also is the strength of my head ;  
 Judah is my lawgiver ;

- Moab is my washpot ;  
 Over Edom will I cast out my shoe ;  
 Philistia, triumph thou because of me.

Who will bring me into the strong city ?  
 Who will lead me into Edom ?  
 Wilt not Thou, O God, which hadst cast us off ?  
 And Thou, O God, which didst not go out with our  
     armies ?  
 Give us help from trouble ;  
 For vain is the help of man.  
 Through God we shall do valiantly ;  
 For He it is that shall tread down our enemies."

We have met with no satisfactory exposition of this Psalm. Its opening verses appear to have been written under a deep sense of disappointment, if not after serious disaster and defeat. The powerful combination of foes arrayed against Israel, rendered the manifest interposition of God absolutely essential to their success. But they, either intoxicated with their former success, or relying too confidently on their own prowess, or from some other cause, had provoked the Lord to allow them to struggle in their own strength, and to rely on their own resources. The melancholy consequence of this was the defeat of their exertions, and the consequent lamentation, "O God, Thou hast cast us off, Thou hast scattered us." "Thou hast showed Thy people hard things: Thou hast made us to drink of the wine of astonishment." After having thus deprecated the Divine displeasure, David falls back on the covenant mercies of Jehovah. "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." Notwithstanding those adverse circumstances, those severe

losses and discouragements which he had sustained, he still adhered to the positive promise which God had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and made it the ground of his confidence and of his hope. As when a good soldier, being pressed with powerful enemies, and almost overwhelmed, begins to think of retiring from the field, but, on seeing the standard of his sovereign floating in the breeze, rushes forward to join the band of its defenders; so David felt, that if his struggle was simply a trial of military strength between himself and the confederated powers against whom he warred, he must retire from the contest, and relinquish his grand object.

But he remembered that God had declared His purpose, that the Hebrews should rule supreme over all these lands: and this he regarded as the standard under which he fought, the banner which he was bound to support, and in the maintenance of which he was called to exert all his energies. On this ground he prays for Divine succour: "That Thy beloved may be delivered; save with Thy right hand, and hear me." David then proceeds to refer to this promise as far as it had been realized, and by anticipation to apprehend its entire accomplishment. "God hath spoken in His holiness: I will rejoice," in the declaration of His truth, and in the possession of His gifts. "I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth;" the first two places at which Jacob stopped when he returned to Canaan from Padan-Aram: these David speaks of as completely in his power; and he proceeds in other language to repeat the same fact: "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine." Gilead was an important Hebrew territory to the east of the Jordan, while Manasseh had half its tribe located on each side of the Jordan. Ephraim also, the most numerous of the

tribes of Israel, was his strength ; and Judah, with all its promises of ruling power, centred in him. All this was given by Jehovah. He had raised up David, and had placed the territory and people of Israel in his hand ; and he held this as a pledge of the full and final accomplishment of all that God had promised. And so he regarded the unfulfilled part of the promise as giving him the same right that actual possession did in respect of other parts ; and so he asserts his right to rule over Moab, and to place it in circumstances of subjection and servitude ; and the same with respect to Edom, whom he regards as Divinely doomed to serve the house of Israel.

On the ground of this covenant grant, David urges his appeal for Divine aid :—

“ Who will bring me into the strong city ?  
 Who will lead me into Edom ?  
 Wilt not Thou, O God ? ”

The Psalm closes with a note of confidence :—

“ Through God we shall do valiantly :  
 For He it is that shall tread down our enemies.”

The war progressed ; and, sometime afterward, David composed another Psalm, which has precisely the same conclusion as that which has just been considered ; but it opens in a much more joyous and thankful strain, although the joy and gratitude are evidently not the results of victory, but the fruits of faith :—

PSALM CVIII.

“ O God, my heart is fixed ;  
 I will sing and give praise,

Even with my glory.

Awake, psaltery and harp :

I myself will awake early.

I will praise Thee, O Lord, among the people :

And I will sing praises unto Thee among the  
nations.

For Thy mercy is great above the heavens :

And Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.

Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens :

And Thy glory above all the earth ;

That Thy beloved may be delivered :

Save with Thy right hand, and answer me.

God hath spoken in His holiness ;

I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem," &c.

In this spirit of devout trust and confidence, the king of Israel prosecuted this arduous warfare.

Without pretending to narrate the prominent events of this war, it may be observed that it seems probable that the opposing armies first met in the Valley of Salt, to the south of the Dead Sea ; where it would seem that several severe battles were fought. In the first of these, although the victory was David's, he found the enemy capable of an obstinate and determined resistance. After this battle, it seems that David pressed on the war against the confederated Syrians ; and having completely defeated them, he returned ; but finding the Edomites again prepared to resist his progress, another deadly conflict took place, on nearly the same ground as the former one. This battle, also, was very obstinately contested ; and the victory which David won on this occasion, greatly added to his military renown. The further prosecution of the war appears to have been principally con-

fided to Abishai and Joab. The former is said to have slain eighteen thousand Edomites in one battle; but whether this was one of the battles previously mentioned, in which he acted as general under David, or a more recent one, cannot be certainly ascertained; nor is it desirable to indulge in hypotheses and speculations as to the exact number or order of these battles, when certainty cannot be attained.

One thing we do know, that after an obstinate and protracted war this formidable combination of Syrians and Edomites was completely defeated, and the country of Edom entirely subdued, and added to the dominions of Israel. This latter achievement was confided to Joab, and must have been a most tedious, harassing, and dangerous enterprise; but, notwithstanding its rock-hewn cities and formidable natural and artificial defences, it was completely brought under the power of David.

Much has been said about the alleged sanguinary cruelty of David's proceedings in these wars; but the accounts are too short, and the terms in which they are given too general, to enable us to form a correct judgment on this subject. It is, for instance, stated: "When David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom; (for six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom)." (1 Kings xi. 15, 16.) Surely these terms cannot be intended to be received in their full and absolute sense. To have cut off every male in Edom, would have been to entirely depopulate the country. Beside, we are told that at this time David "put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants." (2 Sam. viii. 14.) Did David garrison all

the strongholds of Edom to guard them against women? Was it women of whom we read that they "became David's servants?" Certainly not. All the males of Edom found in arms, who refused to submit to the Hebrew monarch, were cut off as enemies in the field; while those who submitted were reduced to servitude.

At the close of this war, when David fondly hoped that he had succeeded in the grand object, he returned to Jerusalem with his army, and composed, for his triumphal song on this occasion, the one-hundred-and-seventeenth and one-hundred-and-eighteenth Psalms.

## PSALMS CXVII. AND CXVIII.

"O praise the Lord, all ye nations!  
 Praise Him, all ye people!  
 For His merciful kindness is great toward us;  
 And the truth of the Lord endureth for ever.  
 Praise ye the Lord.

O give thanks to the Lord; for He is good:  
 For His mercy endureth for ever.  
 Let Israel now say,  
 That His mercy endureth for ever.  
 Let the house of Aaron now say,  
 That His mercy endureth for ever.  
 Let them now that fear the Lord say,  
 That His mercy endureth for ever.

I called upon the Lord in distress:  
 The Lord answered me, and set me in a large place.  
 The Lord is on my side;  
 I will not fear what man can do unto me.  
 The Lord taketh my part with them that help me:

Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate  
me.

It is better to trust in the Lord  
Than to put confidence in princes.  
All nations compassed me about :  
But in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.  
They compassed me about,  
Yea, they compassed me about like bees ;  
They are quenched as the fire of thorns :  
For in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.  
Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall,  
But the Lord helped me.

The Lord is my strength and song,  
And is become my salvation.  
The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the taber-  
nacles of the righteous.  
The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.  
The right hand of the Lord is exalted :  
The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.  
I shall not die, but live,  
And declare the works of the Lord.  
The Lord hath chastened me sore,  
But He hath not given me over unto death."

It is scarcely possible for any poetic celebration of events to agree more closely to the facts of the history, than do these stanzas to the narrative given in the preceding pages. The king of Israel entered on this long and perilous war in full reliance on the covenant promises made to the patriarchs ; and so, while he begins his song of thanksgiving by the invocation to praise God, the first ground on which this appeal is made, is because "the truth of the Lord endureth for ever." The ascription of praise then becomes intensified, and all Israel is called upon to join in a song of



thanksgiving. Then the royal poet proceeds to expatiate on the gracious interpositions of the Lord, and the variety of danger to which he was exposed, the long-continued and desperate opposition he encountered:—all nations encompassed him, encompassed him like bees; they thrust sore at him; but when the help of man was vain, the Lord helped him; and, though brought near to death, he was saved, and crowned with victory and honour.

The whole of this Psalm was evidently responsive, and chanted by the people, the king, the army, and the priests, as they went to celebrate the praises of the Lord in His tabernacles. The latter part is not given, as it has already\* been placed before the reader in illustration of the worship at the Mosaic tabernacle at Gibeon. It has, therefore, been thought unnecessary to repeat it here. But the whole Psalm should be considered as chanted at this thanksgiving service, which closed with a sacrifice to God. This war was followed by a peace which at first promised to be a lasting one.

Relieved from the labours and the anxieties of warfare, David had time to look into the internal affairs of his kingdom, and the personal obligations under which he was laid by the difficulties, promises, and pledges of his seasons of difficulty and trial, before he ascended the throne. Pondering over these matters, it occurred to him to send for Ziba, an old servant in the family of Saul, and to ask him whether there remained any of that family alive to whom he might show kindness for the sake of Jonathan. In reply to this inquiry, Ziba informed the king that a son of Jonathan, named Mephibosheth, was alive, but lame in his feet. On hearing this, David sent for Mephi-

\* *Supra*, page 164.

bosheth, and made him a grant of all the land that belonged to Saul, and appointed Ziba to have the oversight of its cultivation for the benefit of Mephibosheth, who was, at the same time, appointed to eat at the royal table continually as one of the king's own sons.

David had long been on terms of intimacy, and even of friendship, with Nahash, king of the Ammonites, and several acts of friendly interest had passed between the two sovereigns. About this time Nahash died, and was succeeded in the kingdom by his son Hanun. Impressed with kindly feelings for the young king from recollections of the friendship of his father, David sent two of his servants to condole with him and to comfort him. It unfortunately happened, however, for Hanun, that he was surrounded by weak and unworthy advisers. They said to him, "Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? Hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?" The sole apology for this unreasonable and rash advice of Hanun's counsellors is found in the fact that the Ammonites were at this time the only people who held a national existence independent of the Hebrews, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates. Acting on the suggestion of his advisers, Hanun ordered one half of the ambassadors' beards to be shaven off, and their garments to be cut off in the middle, and in this shameful plight he sent them back to their master. On hearing of this outrage, the first thought of David was sympathy for his messengers. He accordingly sent a person to meet them, to soothe their wounded feelings; and, as it was regarded as very shameful for men to appear in public in such circumstances, he counselled them to remain at Jericho until they were able to appear in public in a suitable manner.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WAR WITH THE AMMONITES, AND THE EVENTS WHICH THEN TRANSPIRED.

HAVING committed the outrage just mentioned on the Hebrew ambassadors, Hanun knew that a war between the two countries was rendered inevitable. No nation possessing ordinary power and self-respect would hesitate for a moment to punish such an insult, at almost any risk or cost. Although David can hardly be supposed to have been indisposed to resent the affront offered him by the ill-treatment of his ambassadors, yet he does not appear to have been the first to have recourse to military measures; for the account states, that "when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zobah, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ish-tob twelve thousand men." (2 Sam. x. 6.) These measures of the king of Ammon greatly aggravated his original offence.

Those nations that the Ammonites thus drew into alliance with themselves against David, were principally those whom David had subdued, and were tributary states dependent on him. The success of the Ammonites in forming these alliances casts important light on the social and military position of the states contiguous to the Hebrews at this time. It will be remembered that David defeated Hadadezer,

king of Zobah, soon after he had subdued Moab, and took from him a thousand chariots, seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen. Yet, when he had to war with Edom, he found their army supported not only by Syrians from Zobah, but also by Syrians from Mesopotamia. And now, when Ammon, having outraged all the laws which should regulate the intercourse between independent civilized states, is about to engage in warfare with Israel, they are supported again with an important army mainly drawn from these identical Syrian states. Beth-rehob was a small town in the north of Syria, near Dan: it was probably the parent seat of that branch of the Syrian family which afterward settled in Zobah. Hadadezer, king of Zobah, is said to have been the son of Rehob. (2 Sam. viii. 3.) Thus, although previously subdued, it seems that the whole family of Syrian nations were ready to rise in opposition to Israel, whenever a favourable opportunity offered. Those of Damascus were probably prevented from joining in the confederacy by the presence of the Hebrew garrison.

David sent forth his forces to this war under the command of Joab, the chief captain of his army. On reaching the neighbourhood of the city of Ammon, the Hebrew general found his enemies drawn up in two distinct and separate bodies. The Ammonites had marched out of the city, and were marshalled before the gates to cover the approach to the place; the Syrians were ranged in order of battle at some distance; so that Joab saw that whichever army he assailed, the other would be ready to take advantage of every movement, and to fall on his flanks or rear, as they might see it their policy to do.

It is certain that the Hebrew general regarded his

situation as one of great gravity and peril; but he addressed himself to his duty with the greatest caution and determination. He followed the example of his foes, and divided his army into two sections, placing one under the command of his brother Abishai, and taking the other under his own charge. Joab's estimate of the danger and serious character of the struggle may be gathered from his address to his brother immediately before the battle: "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth Him good." (2 Sam. x. 12.) Joab then marched his division to attack the Syrians, leaving Abishai to fight the Ammonites, each engaging to assist the other as far as possible in case of need.

The Syrian soldiers were evidently unprepared for this movement: when they saw that they had to meet an entire division of the Hebrew army, they shrunk from the contest. For, when "Joab drew nigh, and the people that were with him, unto the battle against the Syrians, they fled before him." And when the Ammonites found that they could count on no support from the Syrians, they also retired from the contest and took refuge in the city. Having for the present broken up this alliance, and compelled the Ammonites to secure themselves in what was then regarded as their impregnable capital, Joab led his troops back to Jerusalem.

The war was not, however, terminated; indeed, it was scarcely begun by this campaign. The Ammonites had not been chastised for the insolent outrage they had committed. This had yet to be accomplished. The Syrians, also, had committed themselves so fully by their alliance with Ammon, that they must either submit to be reconciled to David on his own terms, or

form such a combination of forces as would enable them to resist his power, and establish their independence. They determined to adopt the latter course, and accordingly exerted themselves to the uttermost of their power to form a confederacy which it would be impossible for the Hebrews to resist. To effect this purpose they associated together all the various bodies of Syrians, including among these the king of Mesopotamia, who sent his general Shobach, a most distinguished warrior, to command the allied army. When David heard of this new alliance of his foes, he thought the movement so important, that he collected all the host of Israel, and, placing himself at their head, crossed the Jordan, and marched to Helam, near the west bank of the Euphrates, where Shobach had encamped his army, determined to draw the Hebrews as far from their own country as possible.

On the arrival of the Hebrew army after their long march, the Syrians who had been waiting their approach immediately attacked them, and a very desperate battle ensued. But Providence again favoured the arms of Israel, and David obtained a great and decisive victory. The Syrians had the men of seven hundred chariots, and forty thousand other soldiers, with Shobach their general, slain in the battle. This total defeat completely broke up the new Syrian confederacy. All the kings that had formerly been in subjection to Hadarezer, when they were so severely smitten by David, made peace with the king of Israel, and served him. The inspired writer accordingly closes his account of this momentous campaign with the significant note, "So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more." (2 Sam. x. 19.)

Returning from this war crowned with victory, wealth, and honour, David did not forget the fountain

whence all his blessings flowed ; the true and efficient source of all his success and continued greatness. One at least of the sacred songs composed to identify his triumph with devout thanksgiving and glory to God, and which we suppose to have been chanted on the return of the army in triumph to the capital to return thanksgiving to God in His sanctuary, is :—

PSALM XX.

“The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble ;  
 The name of the God of Jacob defend thee ;  
 Send thee help from the sanctuary,  
 And strengthen thee out of Zion ;  
 Remember all thy offerings,  
 And accept thy burnt sacrifice ;  
 Grant thee according to thine own heart,  
 And fulfil all thy counsel.  
 We will rejoice in thy salvation,  
 And in the name of our God we will set up our  
 banners :  
 The Lord fulfil all thy petitions.

Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed ;  
 He will hear him from His holy heaven  
 With the saving strength of His right hand.  
 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses :  
 But we will remember the name of the Lord our  
 God.

They are brought down and fallen :  
 But we are risen, and stand upright.  
 Save, Lord :  
 Let the king hear us when we call.”

The results of this last campaign had evidently

deeply impressed the mind of David with the vast importance of a full and unreserved trust in God. He had been called, if not into actual collision with the power of Assyria, yet certainly with hosts of warriors who had been trained on the very borders of that ancient nation, and who therefore were acquainted with their arms, armour, military tactics, and everything of theirs relating to warfare. To have subdued a numerous army possessing such advantages, and with the scene of conflict several hundreds of miles from his own country, was a most remarkable triumph, and one which amply justified his exulting in the saving power of God. He had seen mighty men trust in horses and in chariots; but his confidence in his God had enabled him to conquer all opposition, and to exclaim, "They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright." We can scarcely conceive of such a victory. David does not appear to have had either horsemen or chariots; yet although his army was placed at such manifest disadvantage in the battle-field, the Hebrews took seven hundred chariots, and destroyed all the men that fought in them,—so that the fact that the Lord saved His anointed, and was a mightier power than horsemen or chariots, was made perfectly certain.

It may be doubted whether any professed addresses to Deity have been so shallow, empty, and insincere, as many of those avowedly put forth in thanksgiving for national deliverances or great victories, some of which have been occasioned by events that have outraged every principle of morality and religion. Such was not the case here. David was engaged in zealously struggling to secure supremacy over that territory which God had declared it His purpose to place under Hebrew dominion. In this struggle his arms had been crowned with victory, and he returns to his



country with songs of thanksgiving to Jehovah. This, as we have seen, was not the first time this king of Israel is found so engaged; but it may be observed that, as far as we can learn, he had no precedent for this practice. We know of no country or people before his time who recognised the Almighty as the God of battles, and looked to Him for guidance and power, and paid Him their tribute of praise. David and his soldiers and people presented a sincere and spontaneous acknowledgment of God's interposition and blessing. The terms in which this acknowledgment of Divine intervention is expressed, the elevated and pious train of thought which pervades these inspired compositions, clearly show that religion in its spiritual reality and power had obtained extensive influence over the public mind of the Hebrew people at this time.

This fact deserves careful and distinct record, especially by those who are fond of dilating on the alleged ambition and bloody-mindedness of David. While every other people were being plunged into polytheism and idolatry, worshipping the works of their own hands, the creations of their impure imaginations, or the gross perversions of patriarchal truth, here was a people offering sincere and spiritual worship to God; acknowledging Him as supreme in all spiritual and temporal matters; trusting to His guidance and aid in every national enterprise; and receiving every national advantage or military success as favours coming directly from His hand. Well might the great Hebrew lawgiver in the anticipation of such a state of things cry out, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?" (Deut. xxxiii. 29.)

Yet at this time, when the influence of religion was

so pure and so potent, we have to record an instance of gross profligacy and wickedness in the conduct of David. Before we proceed to narrate the circumstances of this painful case, an observation may be offered on the causes which threw the king open to this awful iniquity. It is but seldom (it is believed) that men plunge at once from a real, elevated piety into the deep abyss of abandoned crime. We do not think that this was the case with David. How, then, did his religious declension begin and progress ?

Although, following the patriarchal practice, polygamy was allowed by the Mosaic law, an injunction had been placed on the record by that illustrious law-giver respecting the conduct of Hebrew kings. Foreseeing their power, and the means which would be within their reach for unbridled sensuality, it was forbidden them to multiply wives unto themselves. (Deut. xvii. 17.) The insidious but fatal effect of this practice is distinctly stated in connexion with the law. "Neither shall he (the king) multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away." No number of wives is distinctly prohibited ; but while the number is left to the judgment and conscience of the king, the fatal effect of inordinate indulgence is clearly shown, while its practice is plainly forbidden. The violation of this law appears to have been David's first departure from obedience.

In the days of his persecution and wandering, David had two wives. After he had been made king over Judah at Hebron, he took four wives more, besides reclaiming Michal, Saul's daughter, who had been taken away from him : this made the number of his wives seven. On being established in the throne over all Israel at Jerusalem, he added ten wives more to the number. Besides these, it is said that Saul's wives

were given to him ; (2 Sam. xii. 8 ;) and it is known that he had many concubines, but we cannot ascertain the number ; they were, at the least, ten, and might have been more ; so that he had, at least, twenty-seven women shut up for his sole use. This conduct was clearly an infraction of the Divine law. It was multiplying wives to a most pernicious and unreasonable extent ; while it, at the same time, tended to foster licentious desires, which contributed their influence toward rendering his mind insensible to the restraints of reason and religion.

While things were in this state at Jerusalem, the time arrived when martial operations, which had been suspended in consequence of the unsuitable season of the year, were resumed. David, therefore, determined to complete the chastisement of the Ammonites ; and, for that purpose, sent Joab with a considerable army on this service. Joab commenced this war with his usual success : he defeated the enemy in the field, and besieged Rabbah, their capital city. While thus engaged, David, who still remained in his capital, after reclining on his couch during the heat of the day, on one occasion arose and walked on the terraced roof of his house to enjoy the evening air ; and from thence he saw a woman, probably in the garden or open bath of a contiguous house, bathing herself. This woman was very beautiful ; and seeing her unexpectedly in this manner, David became inflamed with desire, and sent to inquire who the woman was ; and although, in answer to his inquiries, he was told that she was then the wife of one of his most devoted and valiant soldiers, he sent for her, and had criminal intercourse with her, after which she returned to her house.

No doubt David expected and hoped that this sin against God, and against a brave and faithful servant,

would pass undetected and unknown ; but, on the contrary, this transgression was followed by a long series of the most painful consequences. In a short time, Bathsheba sent to inform the king that she was with child ; and as her husband Uriah had been for some time in the army of Joab before Rabbah, the case was one of extreme embarrassment. David, however, instantly devised a plan, which appeared likely to extricate the guilty parties from the consequences of their transgression. He sent to Joab, ordering him to send Uriah to Jerusalem, with an account of the progress of the war. This was done : Uriah arrived, and the king, having received the intelligence which he brought, said to the gallant soldier, " Go down to thy house ;" ordering, at the same time, some victuals from the royal table to be sent to him, to refresh him after his journey. On the morrow, however, the king was told that Uriah had not gone to his house ; the sturdy soldier, declining all domestic enjoyment, spent the night with the soldiers on guard before the palace gate. Foiled in this attempt, David expostulated with Uriah on the strangeness of his conduct ; but the gallant Hittite replied, " The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents ; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields ; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife ? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing." (2 Sam. xi. 11.) Determined, however, to test the injured soldier to the utmost, the king detained him a day or two longer, during which time he feasted Uriah plentifully, and made him drunk. But still Uriah retained sufficient self-possession to adhere to his former determination. He accordingly retired from the royal table, not to go to his own house, but to mix with his companions

in arms: "He went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house."

Defeated in all these efforts to conceal his guilt and the shame of Bathsheba, but one resource remained. This was indeed a horrible alternative; it involved the crime of deliberate, wilful murder, under the most atrocious and aggravated circumstances. Uuriah must be destroyed, or the guilt of the king be made patent to the world. It was, therefore, resolved on. The king wrote a letter to Joab to this effect: "Set ye Uuriah in the fore-front of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die." This letter Uuriah had, Bellerophon like, to carry to Joab. The pliant general obeyed the infamous order, and the gallant Hittite perished. The artful manner in which the intelligence of this catastrophe was sent to David, was well calculated to conceal the deliberate wickedness which had taken place, and was in perfect character with the duplicity and heartlessness of the whole transaction.

The guilty king had at length succeeded: his object was attained. After a brief space, during which she went through the usual course of mourning, Bathsheba became one of the wives of David. Months rolled on; the child was born, and became the object of his father's intense affection, and it seemed as if this abominable iniquity would be passed over unpunished, and but partially known. David and Joab must have known the case fully; but it is very doubtful whether Bathsheba knew that her husband had died by the direct order of the king. Considering the privacy maintained in eastern courts, especially respecting the women's apartments, doubts might be entertained whether the Hebrew public were at all aware of this

wickedness. But this is placed beyond all doubt, by the language used by Nathan in his address to the king: "Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." So that the adultery, at least, was generally known; and the knowledge of it used, as is always the case, to the serious damage of true religion.

Here is a chasm in the history of the religion of the Hebrews which will never be filled in. How did the king conduct himself, in respect to religious worship, during this time? How did he administer the law, in the face of the notorious fact that he was a great transgressor? No answer can be given to these questions. In all probability, the terrible sense of remorse which must always torture the conscience of a man of piety when he falls into sin, was fading away from the mind of the king; and perhaps the people were beginning to lose sight of the iniquity, when the culprit was arraigned, convicted, and condemned.

The silence was broken; the stupor of spiritual death was disturbed by Nathan the prophet. He came to the king by the express command of God, as if to appeal to him in a case of gross individual oppression; and, by a beautiful apologue, he presented the case of a rich man who had numerous flocks and herds, and then exhibited a poor neighbour of his, who had but one ewe lamb, on which all his affection was placed; yet the rich man is described as having spared all his own flocks, and taken the lamb of the poor man, to feast a visitor who had come to him. On hearing this story, the king's anger was greatly excited, and he declared that the person who had been guilty of this outrage should not only restore the lamb fourfold, according to the Mosaic law, (Exod. xxii. 1,) but that he should suffer death, "because he had no pity;"

upon which the prophet immediately replied, "Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon." Never was the arraignment of a criminal more forcible, nor his conviction more complete.

The prophet proceeded to denounce on the king the punishment which the judgment of God awarded to such wickedness. This punishment was threefold. It was to consist of great and terrible evils which would arise in his own house; the public prostitution of his wives; and the death of Bathsheba's child. All these threatened inflictions came on the offending king, and will have to be noticed in the order of their occurrence. But the great noteworthy result of this affecting incident in the history of David, is his conviction, repentance, and pardon.

The torpor which had affected the moral and religious sense of the king was dispelled by the address of Nathan, or, more strictly speaking, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, which accompanied the delivery of that address. The sacred narrative contains no intimation that David felt any compunction or consciousness of sin during the many months that had elapsed from his adultery to the time when Nathan visited him. But no sooner was the real character of his sin placed before him by the prophet, than he exclaimed,

“I have sinned against the Lord.” This expression shows the depth of his awakening, and the intensity of his conviction. It was impossible for him, after hearing the address of Nathan, not to perceive how deeply, how cruelly, he had injured and how foully he had sinned against the gallant Hittite. He must also have seen that he had basely outraged,—had betrayed and sacrificed the best interests of that religious community, which in his better days he had done so much to foster and improve,—of which, indeed, he was the most distinguished member and the temporal head. But neither of these convictions, keen and agonizing as they must have been, was anything in comparison to the estimate he formed of his sin against God; or rather every other conviction and sorrow was swallowed up in the conviction of his transgression against Jehovah, “I have sinned against the Lord.” But we have the means of knowing the precise feelings of David’s mind at this eventful crisis of his history, just as if we had seen him prostrate in the sanctuary before the ark, and had heard him pour out his supplications and confessions before God. These are his words.

## PSALM LI.

“Have mercy upon me, O Lord,  
According to Thy loving-kindness:  
According unto the multitude of Thy tender  
mercies  
Blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions,  
And my sin is ever before me.



Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,  
And done this evil in Thy sight ;  
That Thou mightest be justified when Thou  
speakest,  
And be clear when Thou judgest.  
Behold, I was shapen in iniquity :  
And in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts ;  
And in the hidden parts Thou shalt make me to  
know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop—and I shall be clean :  
Wash me—and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Make me to hear joy and gladness ;  
That the bones Thou hast broken may rejoice.  
Hide Thy face from my sins,  
And blot out all mine iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God !  
And renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from Thy presence ;  
And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation ;  
And uphold me with Thy free Spirit.

Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways ;  
And sinners shall be converted unto Thee.  
Deliver me from blood-guiltiness,  
O God, Thou God of my salvation !  
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteous-  
ness.  
O Lord, open Thou my lips ;  
And my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.  
For Thou desirest not sacrifice—else would I  
give it :  
Thou delightest not in burnt-offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit :  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God ! Thou wilt  
not despise.

Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion :  
Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.  
Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of  
righteousness,  
With offering and whole burnt-offering :  
Then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar."

There are other Psalms which must be given, and which more clearly set forth the deep distress of soul into which the royal criminal was plunged when his sin was brought fully before him ; and he was led by the Holy Spirit to see and feel its enormous wickedness. There is, however, one question of considerable importance which must be settled before we can be prepared fully to understand this part of his history. The terms in which David describes his anguish and deep sufferings on this occasion, have led several eminent commentators to suppose that, after he had fallen into sin, he was visited with a painful, loathsome, and dangerous bodily disease, and that the sufferings occasioned by this disease form the subject of some, at least, of the penitential Psalms. It is very desirable, if possible, to ascertain whether this was so ; or, in other words, whether the bodily weakness and pain of which he complains, were the results of his mental sorrow, or, at least, one of the causes of it.

In the consideration of this subject, it must not be forgotten that although this part of the history of this king is given in great fulness and detail, we do not find a word in the narrative about any sickness, which

would hardly have been the case if he had been dangerously ill. Then, again, it is quite certain that David in his Psalms did use expressions indicating great bodily disorder or injury in a figurative sense, for the purpose of setting forth the intense mental agony which he had to endure through the Divine chastisement. We may instance such language as the following: "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel." (Psalm xxxi. 12.) "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones Thou hast broken may rejoice." (Psalm li. 8.) The terms employed here are certainly figurative. He was like a broken vessel, as he was like a dead man; and a restoration to joy and gladness would be such a relief as the healing of broken bones; but then these terms can only be read as figures, setting forth the agony of mind which he endured, and its effect upon his physical system.

We are quite aware that there are passages in those Psalms which cannot, without apparent violence, be explained in this way. So Dr. Adam Clarke, referring to Psalm xxxviii. 5-7, says, "that David describes a natural disease here cannot reasonably be doubted." Yet Bishop Patrick dissents from this judgment, "because we do not read of any sickness David had." Then it is worthy of observation, that the strong term by which in the Psalm above referred to (verses 3 and 7) he begins and concludes the account of his bodily sufferings, is precisely the word by which Isaiah (i. 6) describes the total depravity of the Hebrew nation; and as this term occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures, the coincidence is the more remarkable. Nor must the important fact be forgotten, that the afflicted Psalmist, having employed these strong expressions as if to describe his physical disease, when afterward

(18-20) he sums up his case, makes no allusion to sickness or bodily pain.

For these reasons, and others that might be named, we are of opinion that David was not afflicted on this occasion with any sickness but what arose from the anguish of his mind, and the conduct of his enemies. This opinion has been formed after very careful and extended research, and is submitted with caution and deference; but a review of the case of the King of Israel at this period in all its bearings, will, it is thought, be sufficient to justify the use of these pungent terms as referring to the sufferings of the man, occasioned by the turpitude of his crimes and the malice of his enemies.

It has been supposed that David's conscience remained callous, and his guilty peace undisturbed, until he was visited by Nathan. This hypothesis may or may not be correct. He might for these months have felt the terrors of the Lord, crushing his mind into the dust, while he was affecting serenity and peacefulness. However this may be, the hour of conviction came, and he stood arraigned and condemned before God. One alleviation was mixed with the cup of anguish put into his hand, but that plainly told him how nearly he had sinned beyond the hope of recovery: "Thou shalt not die." How fearfully these words must have rested on the ear of the terror-stricken king! Bitter and terrible denunciations in rapid succession assured him that his doom was scarcely more tolerable than the bitterness of death itself. "The sword shall never depart from thy house." Evil should be raised up against him even out of his own house. His wives would be publicly outraged, and his darling child die; while, over and above all this awful catalogue of calamities, there rested on his conscience the condemning power

of sin; God was angry with him.\* We have to consider the condition and conduct of David under these circumstances.

In doing this, it must be taken into account that the penal visitation which had been threatened immediately began. "The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick." This led the king to earnest prayer for the life of his infant son. He fasted, and lay on the ground, and cried unto God. He continued thus prostrate in an agony of grief and prayer for seven days, during which time he rejected all the entreaties of his servants to accept of comfort. This was the beginning of his sorrows. It is not believed that he remained all this time absolutely without nutriment; he lay, however, without ordinary food or rest on his bed. This was enough of itself to weaken his body, and, in connexion with the crushing effect of the Divine malediction on his family and future prospects, to paralyse his nervous system, and render him susceptible, in an extraordinary degree, of the religious and temporal fears that arose in his mind. And it must be remembered that these fears were not chimerical. David knew too well that

\* It has been supposed by some, that, when Nathan said, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die," his sin was forgiven. But this, as Dr. Adam Clarke observes, "is perfectly erroneous. David, as an adulterer, was condemned to death by the law of God; and he had, according to that law, passed sentence of death upon himself. God alone, whose law that was, could revoke that sentence, or dispense with its execution; therefore Nathan, who had charged the guilt home upon his conscience, is authorized to give him the assurance that he should not die a temporal death for it: *The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.* This is all that is contained in the assurance given by Nathan: Thou shalt not die that temporal death; thou shalt be preserved alive, that thou mayest have time to repent, turn to God, and find mercy."—Commentary, *in loco*.

the word of God could not fail; that what He had said would certainly come to pass. He had hoped against hope in the case of his infant son; but, notwithstanding his long-continued and earnest prayers, the sentence was executed: the child died.

Taking the Psalms of this period in connexion with its history, there can be scarcely a doubt that the sufferings which David had to endure were greatly aggravated by the malicious acts and efforts of his enemies. It must be frankly admitted that we have no notice in the narrative of the way or manner in which this malignity was manifested; but it is a notorious fact, that in every other season of calamity through which David was called to pass, he found enemies prepared to add greater sorrow to his affliction, and to aggravate his danger by intense hatred and opposition. It was so when he was hunted by Saul, as it was afterwards when flying before Absalom, and also when returning after the defeat of that treason to take possession of his kingdom. And as on these occasions the victim of persecution was blameless, what may not be expected when he is found guilty of the foulest crimes and sins?

The adultery of David and Bathsheba was known; his true friends mourned over his fall; his enemies availed themselves of this occasion to harass and distress him to the utmost. In what manner they did this, as already observed, we do not know; but why should they not have called for his punishment according to law? The private communication of Nathan to the king would probably never reach them; or, if it did, would be disregarded. This opposition, if David had been innocent, and in health, he would have disregarded, or regarded with contempt. But now the case was different. Condemned by his conscience and

by God's law, crushed in his spirit by intense anguish and a sense of the Divine anger, weak in his body by fasting, and watching, and sorrow, David was now prostrate, unable to bear up against the accumulation of evils. His only resource, therefore, was in supplication to God. The extent of his sufferings, and the humble and ardent prayers which he addressed to heaven for pardon and deliverance, may be seen in the following passages taken from some of his penitential Psalms :—

PSALM XXXVIII.

“ O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath :  
 Neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure.  
 For Thine arrows stick fast in me,  
 And Thy hand presseth me sore.  
 There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine  
 anger ;  
 Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my  
 sin.  
 For mine iniquities are gone over my head :  
 As a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.  
 My wounds stink and are corrupt  
 Because of my foolishness.  
 I am troubled ; I am bowed down greatly ;  
 I go mourning all the day long.  
 For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease :  
 And there is no soundness in my flesh.  
 I am feeble and sore broken :  
 I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my  
 heart.

Lord, all my desire is before Thee ;  
 And my groaning is not hid from Thee.  
 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me :

As for the light of mine eyes, it is also gone from me.

My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore ;  
And my kinsmen stand afar off.

They also that seek after my life lay snares for me :  
And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things,

And imagine deceits all the day long.

But I, as a deaf man, heard not ;

And I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.

Thus I was as a man that heareth not,

And in whose mouth are no reproofs.

For in Thee, O Lord, do I hope :

Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.

For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me :

When my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.

For I am ready to halt,

And my sorrow is continually before me.

For I will declare my iniquity ;

I will be sorry for my sin."

PSALM VI.

" O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger,  
Neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure.  
Have mercy upon me, O Lord ; for I am weak :  
O Lord, heal me ; for my bones are vexed.  
But Thou, O Lord, how long ?  
Return, O Lord, deliver my soul :  
O save me for Thy mercies' sake.  
For in death there is no remembrance of Thee :



In the grave who shall give Thee thanks ?  
 I am weary with my groaning ;  
 All the night make I my bed to swim ;  
 I water my couch with my tears.  
 Mine eye is consumed because of grief ;  
 It waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity ;  
 For the Lord hath heard the voice of my  
 weeping.  
 The Lord hath heard my supplication ;  
 The Lord will receive my prayer.  
 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed :  
 Let them return and be ashamed suddenly."

All this language—and more of similar tenor might be given—goes to prove that this royal offender was made fully sensible of the enormity of his transgression, and of his guiltiness before God. Nor does a careful perusal of these, and other penitential Psalms, leave any doubt of the depth and sincerity of his repentance. His sorrow was a godly sorrow ; his heart turned to God for deliverance. "Lord, all my desire is before Thee ; and my groaning is not hid from Thee : for in Thee, O Lord, do I hope ; Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God." "He is worn away by grief ; day and night he feels a mighty hand heavy upon him ; his soul is parched up as with the drought of an eastern summer. But he rises above the present in his passionate hopes for the future. His prayers are the simple expressions of one who loathes sin because he has been acquainted with it, who longs to have truth in his innermost self, to have hands thoroughly clean, to make a fresh start in life with a spirit free and just and new. This is the true Hebrew, Christian, idea of

repentance:—not penance, not remorse, not mere general expressions of human depravity, not minute confessions of minute sins dragged out by a too scrupulous casuistry; but change of life and mind. And in this, the crisis of his fate, and from the agonies of grief, a doctrine emerges, as universal and as definite as was wrung out of the like struggles of the apostle Paul. Now, if ever, would have been the time, had his religion led him in that direction, to have expiated his crime by the sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual. It would seem as if for a moment such a solution had occurred to him. But he at once rejects it. He remains true to the prophetic teaching. He knows that no substitution of dead victims, however costly, can fill up the gulf between himself and God. He knows that it is another and higher sacrifice which God approves. ‘Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it Thee; but Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.’” \*

But David not only saw the unsatisfactory character of mere ritual or ceremonial expiation; he also knew that no humiliation, sorrow, or penitential suffering on account of sin, could atone for his iniquities. Like Abraham, he too saw the day of Christ; and while he distrusted the virtue of mere rites, he knew that his deepest sorrow would be equally unavailing. He knew that in the Divine purpose a body was prepared for one who would come to make propitiation for the sin of the world; and on this better sacrifice, on the atonement to be made by Him who for this purpose

\* DEAN STANLEY'S Lectures on the Jewish Church, Second Series, p. 118.

was to come to do the will of God,\* David trusted for the pardon of his sin. And after a long period of penitence and prayer, God honoured his faith, and forgave his transgressions; assuring his conscience of this fact, and making him who had been crushed beneath a sense of the Divine wrath, a happy recipient of the Divine favour. He exultingly records this great change in the following Psalms :—

## PSALM XXXII.

“ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
 Whose sin is covered.  
 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth  
 not iniquity,  
 And in whose spirit there is no guile.

When I kept silence, my bones waxed old  
 Through my roaring all the day long.  
 For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me :  
 My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.  
 I acknowledged my sin unto Thee,  
 And mine iniquity have I not hid.  
 I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the  
 Lord ;  
 And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

## PSALM CIII.

“ Bless the Lord, O my soul :  
 And all that is within me, bless His holy name !  
 Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
 And forget not all His benefits :

\* Psalm xl. 6-8.

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ;  
 Who healeth all thy diseases ;  
 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction ;  
 Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender  
 mercies ;  
 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things ;  
 So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment  
 For all that are oppressed.  
 He made known His ways unto Moses,  
 His acts unto the children of Israel.  
 The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
 Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.  
 He will not always chide :  
 Neither will He keep His anger for ever.  
 He hath not dealt with us after our sins ;  
 Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.  
 For as the heaven is high above the earth,  
 So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.  
 As far as the east is from the west,  
 So far hath He removed our transgressions from us."

Thus we see that out of David's "broken and troubled heart the dawn of a better life springs up. 'Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O ye righteous ; and shout for joy, all ye that are true of heart.' He is not what he was before, but he is far nobler and greater than many a just man who never fell, and never repented. He is far more closely bound up with the sympathies of mankind, than if he had never fallen." \*

It is a significant fact, that we find no mention of this foul crime in the Book of Chronicles ; all our

\* DEAN STANLEY'S Lectures on the Jewish Church, Second Series, p. 113.

information respecting it is derived from the Book of Samuel, and the Psalms; and this has been of infinite advantage. For, although it has led many to cavil and sneer, it has exhibited the character of godly repentance in such clear and strong terms, and shown the danger to which even the best of men are exposed, that while we lament the fall of so great and good a man, we cannot but feel that the church has been greatly edified by the narrative of this event.

An eminent writer, not too lenient towards sacred characters, thus delivers his views on this topic: "Who is called the man after God's own heart? David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough—blackest crimes; there was no want of sin. And therefore the unbelievers sneer, and ask, 'Is this your man according to God's own heart?' The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, the often-baffled, never-ending struggle of it, be forgotten?.....David's life and history, written for us in these Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul toward what is good and best. Struggle often baffled—sore baffled—driven as into entire wreck: yet a struggle never ended, ever with tears, repentance, true unconquerable purpose, begun anew." \*

But this, the great repentance of David's life, issued in pardon. He obtained a clear sense of the forgiveness of his great transgressions. This is fully proved

\* CARLYLE'S "Heroes and Hero Worship."

by the Psalms already quoted, as well as from the following :—

“ I waited patiently for the Lord ;  
And He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.  
He brought me up also out of the horrible pit,  
Out of the miry clay,  
And set my feet upon a rock,  
And established my goings.  
And He hath put a new song in my mouth,  
Even praise unto our God.”

(Psalm xl. 1-3.)

Thus David, restored to a sense of the Divine favour and peace of mind, and bowing in humble resignation to the will of God in the loss of his child, devoted himself anew to the service of God, and to repair, as far as possible, the damage which his sin had inflicted on the cause of religion. One means by which he endeavoured to do this was singularly curious, and deserves special notice even now. Under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he threw into sweet verse a vivid account of his intense sorrow for his sin ; the agonies of his penitence ; his earnest cries to God for deliverance ; and his hope and trust in the mercy of God ; and this was done with a careful avoidance of all such minute detail as might be suggestive of impunity, and given in such general terms as rendered them universally applicable to all persons similarly affected. He continued these poetic compositions until they embraced a comprehensive outline of God's gracious answer to his prayer, in giving him pardon, and filling his soul with peace and joy. And these Hymns, arising out of these circumstances, and

thus imbued with his soul's struggles throughout the whole course of his penitence and pardon, were handed to the "chief musician" of the tabernacle, to be sung as part of the religious service of that sanctuary. So that the church throughout all time has in them a manual of penitential devotion, and a glorious revelation of the Divine purpose, to impart to all who pursue this course the blessing of pardon and the joys of salvation.

The penal inflictions threatened on the royal criminal began with the sickness and death of Bathsheba's child. The intense agony of the king on this account has been already noticed. Seven days he lay on the ground, fasting and mourning; at length he perceived, by the altered manner of his people, that the dreaded event had happened, and he asked, "Is the child dead?" and on being informed that he was, he arose from the earth, washed and anointed himself, changed his clothes, and then went into the tabernacle and worshipped God, after which he returned to his own house, and took food.

This conduct appeared very strange to his attendants, who expressed their surprise that David could be in such an agony of grief while the child was sick, and yet, when it was dead, and they expected to find his grief greatly aggravated, that he rose above all his afflictions, and was himself again. The king, however, gave a very correct and sensible explanation of his conduct. "While the child was alive," he said, "I fasted, wept, and prayed, hoping that God would be gracious, and spare his life; but when I knew he was dead, why should I weep? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." "This," says Delany, "I will venture to say,

is the noblest lesson upon all that is reasonable and religious in grief that ever was penned." \*

This judgment is undoubtedly correct, because we believe that David was fully assured of the certainty of a future life, in which he would meet his departed child. On any other assumption, there appears little consolation in the thought of our mingling with departed friends in the darkness and oblivion of death. Nor was this the sense in which the Hebrews used such expressions as these. Hence we are told that Abraham died, and "was gathered to his people." (Gen. xxv. 8.) But this was not true of his body; for he was buried far away from all his family and people, in a strange country, in the cave of Machpelah, where only the body of his wife Sarah had been laid. The phrase therefore referred to the common faith of the patriarchs, that the souls of the faithful met together after death, in the place appointed for departed spirits. So God said to Moses and Aaron, "Aaron shall be gathered to his people;" (Num. xx. 26-28;) but he died on Mount Hor, and was laid in a solitary resting-place there, far away from all his friends. So, also, it was said of Moses himself: "Thou also shalt be gathered to thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered." (Num. xxvii. 13.) But he also was buried in such solitude and seclusion, that no one knew his sepulchre. It was common, therefore, for the Hebrews to speak of their departed friends meeting in the world of spirits; and this was, it is fully believed, the sense in which David used the above language in reference to his darling child.

While the king was passing through those throes of penitential anguish, and realizing the blessing of par-

\* "Historical Account of the Life of King David," vol. ii., p. 206.



don, Joab, at the head of the Hebrew army, was prosecuting the siege of Rabbah, the capital city of the Ammonites, with vigour and success. At length, he had gained such advantages, probably by obtaining possession of a part of the place, and by this means cutting off the supply of water from the garrison, that it was certain the place must soon be subdued. In those circumstances the general sent to Jerusalem, requesting the king to come to him, that he might be present in person, and have the honour of the conquest of the place. David complied with this request; and, at the head of a large body of troops to strengthen the army under the command of Joab, reached Rabbah, and soon afterward this royal city was subdued.

This was one of the greatest acquisitions made by the military power of David: the strength of a mighty nation, capable of resisting any ordinary invasion, was completely broken; the king, his courtiers and nobles, taken captives; and the whole population of the city placed at the mercy of the conqueror. The golden crown of the king of Ammon, richly adorned with precious stones, was brought forth and placed on David's head, and immense wealth was taken from the conquered city.

Nor was this all. For with the capital the whole nation was subdued, and thus the only independent military power which existed between Egypt and the Euphrates was annihilated, and the complete supremacy of the Hebrew nation established to the full extent of the Divine charter given to the father of the faithful.

From the manner in which the treatment of the captives of Ammon is described, David has been charged with the most extensive and flagrant cruelty. Referring to the city of Rabbah, the sacred writer

says, "And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he to all the cities of the children of Ammon." (2 Sam. xii. 31.) From these words several critics have formed the opinion so strongly expressed by Bishop Patrick: "Some of the inhabitants he caused to be sawn asunder; over others horses drew harrows with great iron teeth; others were drawn over sharp sickles or sharp stones, which perhaps he means by brick-kilns: for so interpreters understand it, that he dragged them through the place where bricks were made; and then grated their flesh upon the pieces of broken bricks." This is certainly a very ingenious and elaborate explanation of the text; and it might commend itself to reception, if it could be invested with any shadow of probability. But it must be remembered that the sacred writer here is not speaking of a body of soldiers, who, having provoked special resentment, were severely punished, nor even of the crowd of people occupying the capital city. The text distinctly says, that "thus did he to all the cities of the children of Ammon." Surely we must be able to conceive of some motive for such widespread and horrible tortures, and have some clear and decisive evidence that these were actually inflicted, before such an interpretation of a very doubtful text is received. Sceptics and infidels, too fond of casting a slur on the characters of Scripture, will of course not require this evidence; but it might have been expected that a learned and venerable bishop would at least not have committed himself to a judgment so strong, in the absence of such evidence.

A careful examination of the sacred text, however,

affords satisfactory proof\* that the sacred writer never meant to say that he "put them under saws," &c. The first two words of the text in Samuel are truly rendered in the Latin interlinear translation of the Polyglott, *et posuit in serrá*, which words are a key to the whole text, and show that he put them *to the saw*; or, as expressed by an eminent commentator, "the meaning therefore is, He made the people slaves, and employed them *in sawing, making iron harrows, or mining*, (for the word means both,) *and in hewing of wood and making of brick*. Sawing asunder, hacking, chopping and hewing human beings, have no place in the text, no more than they had in David's conduct towards the Ammonites." † Besides this verbal evidence, there is an historical fact, which appears to have been altogether overlooked in this inquiry, but to which we attach great importance. If David did perpetrate such horrible barbarities on the whole nation of the Ammonites, his name would be execrated by the survivors and their descendants for generations. But what is the fact? The very first of the chiefs who, a few years afterwards, hearing that David was fleeing from the rebellion of his son Absalom, came to meet him with supplies of provisions and promises of support,

\* "The whole mistake appears to have arisen from an error in the Hebrew text in Chronicles, by the omission of one small part of one letter: for the word, instead of וישם, *et posuit*, is now וישר, *et serravit*. (1 Chron. xx. 3.) This corruption was probably very ancient, as it is expressed in the Greek version. But still there can be little doubt that the two words were at first the same; and if so, the context requires the word in Samuel, especially as that reading is confirmed by five Hebrew mss. in Chronicles."—KENNICOTT. In short, there being two texts expressing the same fact, our translators seem to have adopted the vitiated one, instead of that which is correct.

† DR. A. CLARKE, *in loco*.

was "Shobi, the son of Nahash, of Rabbah, of the children of Ammon!" If David had committed the atrocious cruelties imputed to him, the prince and the people of Ammon would have rejoiced to range themselves under the standard of Absalom; but they are found the first sympathizers and supporters of the persecuted monarch; thus affording a clear proof that he never inflicted on the nation the injuries which have been charged upon him.

The object of this important war having been thus thoroughly secured, the Ammonitish nation was completely subdued, and Rabbath-Ammon, the former capital, in future regarded as pertaining to the tribe of Gad. Great spoil was taken from the captured cities; and the crown of gold, studded with precious stones, was taken from the conquered king and placed on the head of David, whose triumph was complete. The extent of his sway now met his utmost wishes, and was in accordance with the Divine promise; his sin was forgiven, and his heart again right with God. So that on his return he was prepared, as heretofore, to render his thanksgivings to God in sacred song, which he did in several Psalms, and from which we select the following:—

## PSALM XXI.

"The king shall joy in Thy strength, O Lord;  
 And in Thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!  
 Thou hast given him his heart's desire,  
 And hast not withholden the request of his lips.  
 For Thou preventest him with the blessings of Thy  
 goodness:  
 Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.\*

\* That taken from the king of Ammon.

He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it him,  
 Even length of days for ever and ever.  
 His glory is great in Thy salvation :  
 Honour and majesty hast Thou laid upon him.  
 For Thou hast made him most blessed for ever ;  
 Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy  
 countenance.  
 For the king trusteth in the Lord,  
 And through the mercy of the Most High he shall  
 not be moved.

Thy hand shall find out all Thine enemies,  
 Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee.  
 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of  
 Thine anger :  
 The Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath,  
 And the fire shall devour them."

## PSALM XXXIII.

" Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous !  
 For praise is comely for the upright.  
 Praise the Lord with harp :  
 Sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument  
 of ten strings.  
 Sing unto Him a new song ;  
 Play skilfully with a loud noise.

For the word of the Lord is right ;  
 And all His works are done in truth.  
 He loveth righteousness and judgment ;  
 The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.  
 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made ;  
 And all the host of them by the breath of His  
 mouth.

He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a  
heap :

He layeth up the depth in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord :

Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of  
Him.

For He spake, and it was done ;

He commanded, and it stood fast.

The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to  
nought :

He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever,

The thoughts of His heart to all generations.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord ;  
And the people whom He hath chosen for His own  
inheritance.

The Lord looketh from heaven,

He beholdeth all the sons of men.

From the place of His habitation

He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

He fashioneth their hearts alike ;

He considereth all their works.

There is no king saved by the multitude of a host :

A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

A horse is a vain thing for safety,

Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear  
Him,

Upon them that hope in His mercy ;

To deliver their soul from death,

And to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waiteth for the Lord :

He is our help and our shield.  
 For our heart shall rejoice in Him,  
 Because we trusted in His holy Name.  
 Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us,  
 According as our help is in Thee."

There are none of the Psalms of David that more clearly allude to the circumstances that called them forth, than these; none that more strikingly exhibit the grateful recognition of the Divine goodness, and more fully express his sense of the unspeakable importance of unwavering faith in God, than these sacred songs. In the twenty-first Psalm, the inspired author praises God for giving him "his heart's desire,"—the entire conquest of all the territory promised to the seed of Abraham, and this thanksgiving culminates in praise for the possession of "the crown of pure gold," studded with precious stones, which was taken from the head of the vanquished king of Ammon, and now adorned the conqueror's brow. Then, his desires being satiated with present blessings, he throws his thoughts into the future, and realizes the joys of a present and everlasting salvation. In the thirty-third Psalm the author extols the power and goodness of God, and expatiates on the manifestation of these attributes in creation and providence. With his mind filled with these sublime thoughts, he calls on the righteous to rejoice in the Lord, and to exercise all their powers and ingenuity in proclaiming His praise. He then shows the vanity of every other refuge for man, or for nations; and closes a brilliant declaration of his confidence with the bold request that the measure and degree of the Lord's mercy to him might be in accordance with the certainty and

extent of his hope in God. We cannot end this important section of David's history without directing attention to the evidence afforded by these Psalms of his perfect restoration to a life of elevated piety, and to happy intercourse with heaven.



## CHAPTER XII.

### TO THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM.

DURING the two years which passed after the conquest of the Ammonites, the Hebrew nation appears to have had peace and prosperity. Solomon was born, and favoured with Divine blessing from his infancy. The earliest account of this child, as it stands in our authorized version of the Scriptures, is not very intelligible. "And she bare a son, and called his name Solomon: and the Lord loved him. And He sent by the hand of Nathan, and He called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord." (2 Sam. xii. 24, 25.) That is, the Lord loved him, and the Lord sent by the hand of Nathan, and the Lord called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord. It is not probable that this is the sense of the passage; and, as the original terms can reasonably be rendered, "The Lord sent him under the hand, or into the hand, or care, of Nathan the prophet,"\* it seems that the text was intended to inform us that the Lord loved Solomon, and directed him to be placed, for religious instruction and training, under the care and guidance of the prophet Nathan. On account of this Divine attention, he called him "Jedidiah, *the beloved of the Lord.*" But the name given by God to him

\* This rendering is adopted by Bishop Patrick from Victorinus Strigelius, and is approved by Dr. Chandler; who says the original word employed, *ἵ*, is used to denote "care, instruction, guidance."

before his birth always prevailed ; and that given by the prophet is never afterward referred to.

Although these numerous and important providential interpositions ministered very great comfort and joy to the country at large, and to David in particular, and were necessary for the ultimate accomplishment of the Divine purpose in regard to his family and kingdom, yet they could not avert those judgments which God had declared should fall on him, through his family, on account of his aggravated transgressions. The Lord had said, "I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house ;" and now, after having received much blessing from the Divine hand, the infliction was to begin.

Amnon was the eldest son of the king, and therefore, according to general usage, the probable successor to his throne. This young prince conceived a violent passion for his half sister Tamar, the king's daughter by Maachah, the mother of Absalom. As these persons were so nearly related, they could not be legally married, so that Amnon saw no way of gratifying his ardent desires ; and, under the influence of passion and despair, became sick. In his illness, Amnon was visited by his friend and cousin, Jonadab, David's nephew, who inquired into the cause of this sickness, and urged his inquiries, until he learned the whole case, and knew that his friend was languishing and pining away under the influence of this attachment to his sister. Jonadab was a very artful and, it is feared, a very wicked man. Having ascertained the cause of his friend's indisposition, he advised him how he should proceed, so as to accomplish his desires. Acting on this advice, Amnon feigned himself sick, and caused the king to be informed of his illness : David, concerned for his son, went to see him, when Amnon, fol-

lowing the counsel of Jonadab, requested that he would send his sister to him, that she might nurse him, and prepare him food. To this proposal the king consented, and the princess was accordingly sent to the house of Amnon. On her arrival, she prepared him some food, and took it to his room; when he seized her violently, and, despite her entreaties and resistance, basely effected his purpose. But the most extraordinary part of the story is, that immediately afterwards the intense passion with which he had regarded her changed into an equally strong dislike and disgust; so that he ordered her instantly to leave his house; and when she expostulated against this new cruelty, he called his servant, and had her forcibly sent away.

The injured princess, with all the marks of deep humiliation, sorrow, and distress, returned to her brother Absalom. He received her kindly; and, having divined the cause of her distress, counselled her to be silent on the subject; and he, although meditating deep revenge, also abstained from speaking to Amnon respecting his crime. Information of this disgraceful conduct of his eldest son reached the ears of the king, excited his anger in a high degree, and caused him very severe pain.

Two whole years elapsed, during which time Tamar lived in seclusion in Absalom's house; when, the recollection of the outrage having faded away from public recollection, her brother thought he might carry out the plan of revenge which he had long ago formed. He accordingly availed himself of the opportunity afforded by his extensive sheep-shearing, to invite the king and all his sons to attend the festival. The king declined for himself, but allowed all his sons to accept the invitation. This compliance with his request gave Absalom the means of punishing the violation of his

sister, which he had so long and anxiously waited for. He accordingly commanded his servants to await the signal which he would give during the feast, when Amnon was heated with wine, to smite and kill him. These instructions were punctually obeyed; Amnon fell at the command of his brother. This assassination so terrified the other princes that they immediately mounted their mules and fled toward the capital. The rumour, however, outstripped their speed, and aggravated the disaster; for David was told that Absalom had slain all the king's sons.

The conscience-stricken king, with the Divine threatening still ringing in his ears, that God would raise up evil to him out of his own house, was too ready to receive the report; and, believing it in its worst form, he rent his clothes and cast himself on the earth. But the artful Jonadab, who seems to have been privy to most of the mischief which befell the royal family, dispelled his fears by telling him that Amnon only was slain; a version of the calamity which was soon confirmed by the appearance of the princes who had fled from the scene of Amnon's murder.

Although less afflictive than the first rumour, this calamity was very distressing to David. His eldest son was cut off by a violent death, and by the order of his brother; who in consequence had to fly, and take refuge in a distant country. Absalom escaped to Geshur, on the borders of Syria, to the north-east of Palestine, where he was supported and protected by Talmai the king, his maternal grandfather. As the conduct of David in not punishing Absalom for this murder has been called into question, it should be observed that the crime of Amnon was according to the Mosaic law capital, and merited death, (Lev. xx.

17,) and by the patriarchal law which was recognised and kept in force by Moses, Absalom, as the next of kin to the injured person, might inflict the punishment; so that the act of Absalom was not punishable by regular process of law. But although this plea might have interposed a bar against legal punishment, if proceedings had been taken, it has been gravely doubted whether the outrage on Tamar was the only cause of the assassination of Amnon. This prince was the eldest son of David, and as such, according to general usage, heir to the throne. Absalom was next in succession. In cutting off the elder brother, therefore, not only was a flagrant crime punished, but a rival removed out of the way. The future conduct of Absalom certainly justifies the surmise that in this act he had some idea of smoothing his own way to the throne, as well as of avenging the wrong done to his sister.

Absalom remained at Geshur three years. David's grief for Amnon had by this time subsided, and his heart yearned after Absalom. Joab marked the change which had taken place in the king's feelings, and induced a clever woman of Tekoa to submit a fictitious case of wrong and suffering to the king. By this means, having first excited his sympathy, she paved the way for an earnest appeal to him on behalf of Absalom. David saw through the whole plot, and traced the whole proceeding to the ingenuity of Joab; yet he allowed himself to be persuaded to permit the return of the exiled prince to Jerusalem. But this was the full extent of the concession. He was not allowed to appear at court, but remained in his own house in such seclusion that for two full years he did not see the king's face.

How fearfully and how fully do these facts verify

the denunciation delivered by Nathan! David was, as all his character and Psalms prove, a man of the keenest sensibility, and of the most ardent affection for his family. To such a man how miserable must these seven years of his life have been! True, he exercised royal authority over a vast extent of territory; he was surrounded with wealth and honour; to the public eye he was a monarch invested with all that heart could wish; but from the day of Amnon's incest, what peace could have rested in the heart of his father? Then his murder followed, then Absalom's exile, and afterward his two years of exclusion from society in Jerusalem. What glory of power, what tinsel of wealth or greatness, could make a father happy in such circumstances? and especially when, although he knew that his own sin had been pardoned, he also knew that these chastisements had fallen on him according to the word of the Lord, on account of his transgressions.

Wearied by the semi-banishment to which he was subjected, Absalom resorted to violent means to obtain an interview with Joab; and having at last succeeded, though his instrumentality he was permitted to see his father. Having obtained access to the person of the king, a reconciliation took place, and Absalom was permitted to appear in public and attend the king's court, as he had formerly done. Having been thus restored to his former position, this prince might have conducted himself as a good son and a loyal subject; he might have rendered himself very useful to his father who was now past the prime of life, and also might have laid his country under great obligations to his ability and devotedness. Unfortunately for his father, himself, and the public interests of the nation, he adopted and pursued a very different course of action.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM.

THIS prince, besides having a very handsome person, and a beautifully symmetrical figure, possessed great energy of mind, a most agreeable address, and lofty ambition. Having obtained perfect reconciliation with his father, he began to pursue a course of action which, so far as we are informed, was then without a precedent among the princes of Israel.

When all the circumstances of the case are considered, there can scarcely be a doubt but that, during his exile at Geshur, and his seclusion in his own house his mind meditated deep-laid schemes of retaliation and revenge. He evidently considered his conduct towards Amnon as called for and amply justified by the crime of that prince; and that his death by an unauthorized executioner was rendered necessary by the absence of all legal action in punishing the ravisher. Absalom therefore commenced his disorderly course of procedure, not only under the influence of an intense ambition, but also actuated by a deep sense of what he considered the injustice of his father's administration.

It is easy to conceive how readily he might have reasoned himself into this conviction: knowing of the king's adultery with Bathsheba, he might have persuaded himself that he looked on the outrage committed on Tamar with too much leniency; while, if he knew, as he probably did, the cause of Uriah's death,

he could but draw a contrast very unfavourable to the king from the exemption of him from punishment who had carried out the destruction of an innocent and brave man, and the sufferings of himself, because he had put to death one who had committed a crime which the law regarded as deserving of death. When, therefore, the conduct of Absalom is regarded in connexion with the circumstances in which he was placed, and as the act of a daring, ambitious, and irreligious spirit, it cannot be considered as very extraordinary; at least, we must see that he was surrounded by circumstances, the combined influence of which was likely to prompt him to some such course of conduct.

Whatever might have led him to meditate rebellion against his father and his sovereign, Absalom entered upon the task he had assigned to himself with consummate shrewdness and policy. He began by assuming unusual state and splendour. Chariots and horses were called into requisition, and fifty men were employed to run before him. By these means the prince presented an imposing appearance, and excited general attention in a more than ordinary degree. These appearances, combined with his handsome person and princely bearing, gave him great consequence in public estimation, and made him the object of general attention and respect.

Having thus laid the ground-work for his scheme of action, Absalom took another step. He proceeded to treat the people with great condescension and familiarity. His intercourse with them became free and unconstrained, full of blandness and good nature. Indeed, his whole conduct at the outset of this enterprise evinced a most extensive knowledge of human nature, and a most careful adherence to every means likely to ingratiate himself in favour with the people generally,



and to promote his popularity to the greatest possible extent.

He then proceeded to carry out his designs, by apparently evincing a very deep interest in the case of persons who, supposing themselves to be aggrieved, had applied to courts of justice for redress. To secure the good-will of this class of individuals, Absalom rose early in the mornings, and placed himself in the way of those who came to court with matters of dispute and litigation, and with great tenderness of manner and professed solicitude would inquire into the several causes, and express regret that more ready and efficient means were not provided for the administration of justice, saying, "O that I were made judge in the land, that every man that hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" All this was accompanied with the greatest condescension and kindness, and in such a manner as to produce an impression of his diligence, self-denial, and aptitude for business, and especially to fascinate the people with his good nature and accessibility. For, when any man drew near to him to do him reverence, he prevented it by taking the person by the hand and kissing him.

In this manner he conducted himself so successfully, that he became extensively popular; and thus, as described in the nervous language of the sacred record, he "stole the hearts of the men of Israel." (2 Sam. xv. 6.) Having thus, as he believed, sufficiently prepared his way, Absalom, under the pretence of performing a vow, which he said he had made while he was in Geshur, solicited leave of the king to repair to Hebron, to serve the Lord by a sacrifice there. David readily gave him leave, and Absalom departed. But instead of directing his mind to any religious object, he sent messengers through all the tribes of Israel,

to inform his partisans that, as soon as they heard that the trumpet was sounded in Hebron, they should know and publish that Absalom was made king in that royal city.

When the prince set out from Jerusalem on this rebellious enterprise, he took with him two hundred men, who went in their simplicity, being entirely ignorant of his object. But having arrived at Hebron, and while the sacrifice was being prepared, the fact gradually became known that the sacrifice was intended to be no private act of religious worship, but a regal inauguration feast. And as this intelligence spread, the people from all quarters crowded around the aspiring prince, and greatly strengthened his hands. This accession of numbers continued, until he found himself at the head of a vast host of followers.

Although this response to his appeal by such a numerous body of adherents must have greatly encouraged the traitor-prince, and have given him great confidence, it did not supply all that he required. He had as much need of wisdom in council as of numbers in the field; and, to obtain this, he sent to the little city of Giloh, and invited Ahithophel to come to him. This man was the most eminent for sagacity and wisdom in all Israel. His judgment, we are told, was, in all matters of doubt, as decisive as the oracle of God. He had been David's confidential adviser and chief counsellor; yet, on receiving the invitation of Absalom, he immediately accepted it, and joined him at Hebron. As this sage was the grandfather\* of Bathsheba, it has been surmised that he took this step in revenge for David's conduct towards her. This, however, appears very unlikely. Bathsheba had now for some years been David's favourite queen; and it seems very

\* Compare 2 Sam. xi. 3 with xxiii. 34.

improbable that their pre-nuptial intercourse would have excited such long-standing animosity with her family. It is much more likely that Ahithophel judged from what he heard of the extreme popularity of Absalom, that David's case was hopeless; and that if the course of the rebel prince was wisely directed, he would be certain to obtain the crown and the kingdom. And such, but for the interposition of an overruling Providence, would undoubtedly have been the case.

On being informed of these rebellious proceedings, David instantly resolved to seek safety in flight. From the sacred narrative it seems that an anxiety to preserve the inhabitants of the city from slaughter, mainly contributed to bring the king to this resolution; but there can be little doubt that he felt himself unable, with the handful of troops then in the royal city, to repel the strong tide of rebellion which was rolling over the country in favour of Absalom. He accordingly ordered his family and friends to prepare for immediate departure from the capital. Deeply wounded as he was as a father, humbled and outraged as a sovereign, David retained all his sagacity, judgment, and self-possession. His plan was instantly laid. He determined to retire across the Jordan, to the seat of the trans-Jordanic tribes on the east of that river, and to endeavour to reach Mahanaim, where he hoped to make a stand, and at least secure the safety of his family and of his person. This city arose on the spot memorable in the history of Jacob, and had become a populous place, and an important military position. Abner selected this city as the capital of the kingdom of Israel, when, on the appointment of David to be king over Judah at Hebron, he secured the ten tribes as a kingdom for Ishbosheth, the son of

Saul. The result justified the wisdom of David's choice. For when his army had grown to sufficient dimensions to meet the rebel forces in the field, it found sufficient accommodation here; for, on that occasion, "all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands." (2 Sam. xviii. 4.)

However wisely these measures might have been planned, it was a work of great difficulty and peril to carry them into actual practice. The hurried retreat of the king, and of his household, when considered in connexion with all the circumstances of the case, was fraught with immense danger, and exhibited a scene perhaps without a parallel in history. Never, perhaps, did a man display more true nobility of soul and sterling piety than did David on that day. The whole court, with all his faithful attendants, his body-guard and other soldiers, and all those who attached themselves to his fortunes, sallied forth from the city on the morning of that mournful day, amid the amazement and lamentation of those among the people who were aware of the cause of this strange movement. It does not appear that the usual cavalcade of horses or mules were called into requisition on that occasion; for the whole procession seems to have been on foot. Having emerged from the city, the vast crowd made their first halt at a place called Beth-maachah. Here they were arranged into something like regular order. The body-guard of the king, the Cherethites and Pelethites, took the lead, followed by the regular soldiery; then came the six hundred men who had accompanied David in his wanderings, before his accession to the throne; the king and his household and friends came next; a guard of soldiers covering the rear.

As they thus proceeded, the king observed Ittai of Gath among his followers; and, addressing him, urged

his return, advising him not to expose himself and his men to danger and travel on his account, at the same time giving him his blessing. The noble-minded Philistine promptly and positively refused to leave the king, declaring, with the utmost fervour, his determination to share the fate of his sovereign, whether in life or in death. Thus the procession passed on ; descending the valley east of the city, they crossed the brook Kedron, and went up the slopes of Olivet. Not till then did the general population comprehend the serious nature of this measure. Now they saw that the king had resolved to abandon the city, and to depart to a distance ; and, as this conviction became general, a universal cry of sorrow ascended to the skies : according to the expressive language of the sacred record, " All the country wept with a loud voice."

As they went up the hill, the king's company was joined by another procession. The two principal priests, Zadok and Abiathar, with a troop of Levites, bearing the ark of God, which they had taken from the sacred sanctuary on Mount Zion, came to accompany the sovereign in his flight. But this David would not allow. Influenced apparently by high religious principle, he would not consent to take the ark with him in his wandering and dangers. He had too sacred a regard for the seat of the presence of Jehovah to expose it to the vicissitudes of his flight, and the warlike struggles which were likely to be the result of this rebellion. David had also a faith in God too intelligent in its nature to suppose that even this sacred symbol could confer any additional benefit on him in his trouble, while he had full confidence in the mercy and protection of Jehovah. He therefore commanded the priests and Levites to return with the ark to the city, and to replace it in the tabernacle, saying : " If I

shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it and His habitation ; but if He thus say, I have no delight in thee, here I am, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him." In this way did the afflicted king unreservedly trust in the Lord.

But David, while acting under a sense of religious obligation in returning the sacred ark to its place, saw that this incident might be turned to very favourable account in his difficult and dangerous circumstances. He could not be ignorant of the vast importance to his cause of having confidential friends in Jerusalem to apprise him of the measures which his rebellious son would adopt, and thus enable him as far as possible to frustrate them. So he urged Zadok and Abiathar to return to the city, telling them that he would go on, and abide in the wilderness, until Ahimaaz the son of Zadok and Jonathan the son of Abiathar should bring him intelligence of the course taken by Absalom. The priests complied with this request ; and, with their attendant Levites bearing the ark, returned to Jerusalem.

The king, having disposed of this matter, resumed his march, and, with his head uncovered, weeping and barefoot, followed by his attendants, also weeping, reached the summit of Olivet. Here the afflicted sovereign was told of the defection of Ahithophel, and that he was now attending on Absalom. This intelligence sensibly affected the king : from the effects of such treason he felt there was but one refuge, and to this he instinctively turned with all the power of his devout mind ; for, lifting his weeping eyes to heaven, he exclaimed, " O Lord, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." Soon afterward the procession made another halt by a soli-

tary olive-tree in the wilderness on the way to Jericho.

Here David gave vent to his feelings on the unprincipled defection of Ahithophel, in one of the most spirited and impassioned of his poetical compositions.

PSALM LV.

“ Give ear to my prayer, O God !  
And hide not Thyself from my supplication.  
Attend unto me, and hear me :  
I mourn in my complaint and make a noise,  
Because of the voice of the enemy,  
Because of the oppression of the wicked :  
For they cast iniquity upon me,  
And in wrath they hate me.

My heart is sore pained within me :  
And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.

Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,  
And horror hath overwhelmed me.  
And I said, O that I had wings like a dove !  
For then would I fly away, and be at rest.  
Lo ! then would I wander far off,  
And remain in the wilderness.  
I would hasten my escape  
From the windy storm and tempest.

Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues :  
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.  
Day and night they go about upon the walls  
thereof :  
Mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.

Wickedness is in the midst thereof:  
Deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

For it was not an enemy that reproached me ;  
Then I could have borne it :  
Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify  
himself against me ;  
Then I would have hid myself from him.  
But it was thou—a man mine equal,  
My guide, and mine acquaintance.  
We took sweet counsel together,  
And walked to the house of God in company.  
Let death seize upon them,  
And let them go down quick into hell ;  
For wickedness is in their dwellings, and among  
them.

As for me, I will call upon God ;  
And the Lord shall save me.  
Evening, and morning, and at noon,  
Will I pray and cry aloud ;  
And He shall hear my voice.  
He hath delivered my soul in peace  
From the battle that was against me ;  
For there were many with me.  
God shall hear and afflict them,  
Even He that abideth of old.  
Because they have no changes,  
Therefore they fear not God.  
He hath put forth his hands against such as be at  
peace with him :  
He hath broken his covenant.  
The words of his mouth were smoother than  
butter,  
But war was in his heart :



His words were softer than oil,  
Yet were they drawn swords.

Cast thy burden on the Lord,  
And He shall sustain thee :  
He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.  
But Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the  
pit of destruction ;  
Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half  
their days ;  
But I will trust in Thee."

Just at this time, or a little before, Hushai, an intimate friend of David, joined him, with every demonstration of profound grief and sympathy for his deplorable condition. He was eminent for wisdom and political sagacity, and his presence seems to have imparted the first ray of consolation and hope to the mind of the depressed and afflicted king. Roused from the depth of his sorrow, David immediately saw that the presence of this wise Archite in the city might be of the greatest possible advantage to his cause. He accordingly told his friend Hushai that he was not adapted to assist him in the journeying and war that was likely to ensue, and therefore his company with him would rather be a burden than a help ; but that if he would return to the city, and insinuate himself into the council and confidence of Absalom, he might be able to counteract the counsel of Abithophel, and thus most effectually to serve his cause. David at the same time also reminded him that the priests Zadok and Abiathar were in his interest, and their sons pledged to bring him information of what was transpiring in Jerusalem ; so that, if he could get into the secrets of Absalom's policy, there was an effectual way of communicating the informa-

tion to the king. Hushai readily complied with this request, and returned to the city to perform the office with which he had been charged in the best way he could.

The sudden departure of such a sovereign as David from his capital, to avoid the aggression of his rebellious son, was likely to call forth a crowd of interesting incidents; and it was particularly so in this case. After David had passed the summit of Olivet, and was proceeding toward the wilderness, he was overtaken by Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, who brought a present of two asses, and a quantity of bread, raisins, summer fruits, and a bottle of wine. When the king inquired the meaning of this, Ziba told him that the asses were for the king's household to ride upon, and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for such as be faint in the wilderness to drink. Then the king inquired, "Where is thy master's son? And Ziba said, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem; for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father." Affected by the opportune attention of Ziba, and presuming on the ingratitude of Mephibosheth, the king at once conferred on Ziba the estates which he had previously given to his master.

On journeying toward the valley of the Jordan, this mournful procession neared the village of Bahurim; and, as David passed it, there came out a man of the house of Saul, named Shimei. He assailed the king with a torrent of coarse invective, cursing him, and casting stones at him. This conduct he continued for some considerable time, running along the side of the hill so as to keep just abreast of the king. Abishai, moved with indignation at this atrocious conduct, implored the king for leave to go over and take off the slanderer's

head. David gave him a positive refusal, submitting to this indignity as another ingredient in the bitter cup which the providence of God had assigned him, "saying, Behold, my son seeketh my life : how much more now may this Benjamite do it? The Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that He will requite me good for his cursing this day."

Thus the king and his followers moved towards the banks of the Jordan ; and, having arrived there, they prepared to rest for the night. This melancholy procession had, during the day, walked about twenty-five miles, over bad roads, in a country for the most part wild and mountainous. They, consequently, all of them required refreshment and rest.

While David and his sympathizing friends were performing this inhospitable journey, Absalom came to Jerusalem, accompanied by Ahithophel and a multitude of followers. On his arrival, Hushai immediately went to see him, and saluted the usurper with, "God save the king." Absalom, forgetting the duty he owed to a father, reproached Hushai for deserting his friend. The wily Archite replied, "Nay, but whom the Lord, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. And again, whom should I serve? should I not serve in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence." (2 Sam. xvi. 16-19.) We cannot avoid observing that nothing can justify this duplicity and falsehood. Such conduct only mars the cause it was intended to serve. Jacob would have had the birthright, without his mercenary conduct respecting the pottage, and the blessing of his father without the lying and duplicity devised by his mother. And so Providence could, and would, have

saved David, if these false and scandalous professions of devotion to Absalom had never been put forth by Hushai.

Having secured possession of the capital and the palace, Absalom asked Ahithophel what he should next do to carry out his object, and to secure the prize at which he aimed. The sage politician then proposed that Absalom should go in unto his father's concubines. There were ten women of David's household that David had left in charge of the house; and this advice was intended to make an irreparable breach between the father and the son, and to exhibit on the part of Absalom a public claim to royal authority even over the king's harem. This advice, disgusting and repugnant to every idea of modesty and propriety, was actually followed. A tent was spread over the flat roof of the royal residence; and there, in the sight of the assembled multitudes of Israel, did Absalom go in unto his father's concubines. Thus was the most terrible part of the malediction pronounced by Nathan completely verified. "Thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun." (2 Sam. xii. 11, 12.) There is a circumstance connected with this act of Absalom seldom or never mentioned. It was as he walked on the roof of his house that David first saw Bathsheba; and it was on the same roof that this shameful exhibition took place. So that it seems almost certain that it was on the same spot on which he stood, when his lustful passions were raised, and his adulterous purpose formed, that this most humiliating and revolting punishment was inflicted on him.

Having thus far directed the measures of the usurper, Ahithophel proceeded a step further, and made a proposal of the most momentous importance respecting the fugitive monarch; which, in all human probability,

would, if it had been acted on, have been fatal to the king and people. Ahithophel asked Absalom to place twelve thousand men under his orders, promising that he would pursue and overtake the king, and fall upon him while he was "weary and weak-handed;" that he would smite the king alone, and bring back all the people to tender their allegiance to the new sovereign. This proposal was very pleasing to the rebel prince, and to all the elders that had attached themselves to him. But pleased as he was with the suggestion, Absalom hesitated to act upon it, and said, "Call Hushai the Archite, and let us hear likewise what he saith." When Hushai entered, the prince told him what Ahithophel had advised, and then said, "Shall we do after his saying? if not, speak thou." To this inquiry Hushai replied, "The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time." The Archite then went on to expatiate on the military abilities of David, his sagacity and valour; assuring the prince that such an expedition would certainly fail; for it would not find David, as a man of his wisdom and experience would certainly be hid in some secure concealment; and that, considering the acknowledged bravery and great resources of the captains that were with him, such a small force as Ahithophel had asked for would assuredly be defeated by them, and thus the *prestige* of Absalom's position, now so strong, would be totally lost. Hushai accordingly strongly advised the prince to avoid any precipitate action, and to gather from all Israel as large an army as possible, so that they might march against the king in such numbers as would be irresistible, and would undoubtedly overwhelm and destroy him, and all that were with him.

The Divine Providence that watched over the fortunes of David, led Absalom and his friends to reject

the wise counsel of Ahithophel, and accept the course so speciously and plausibly recommended by Hushai. But before this decision was made known, Hushai found means to inform the friendly priests of the conflicting advices which had been given; and as it was uncertain which would be adopted, he wished the king to be cautioned to make instant provision for his personal safety. The priests immediately sent off their sons with the information to David. These young men were observed leaving the neighbourhood of the city, and were pursued by the emissaries of Absalom. But although they had a very narrow escape at Bahurim, where a woman concealed them in a well, they succeeded in reaching the king on the banks of the Jordan at nightfall, just as he had hoped all the toils and dangers of that day were ended.

Thus advised, David aroused his family, and proceeded immediately to cross the river; and having succeeded in this, the king retired to rest, while the military leaders took the charge of bringing over the whole body of the soldiers and people, which they completely effected by daylight on the following morning. With what feelings did David close such an eventful day? With a mind so sensitive as his, how could he contemplate the varied dangers and vicissitudes which had followed him from the early dawn until late at night? How did he regard the wondrous changes which in a few short hours had reduced him from the position of a potent and wealthy king to the low estate of a fugitive and an outcast? Happily we have the means of knowing, of reading the desires and aspirations of his soul in their outgoings to his God. There can be no doubt that the following Psalms were written to rear up an imperishable memorial of the thoughts and feelings of this good man, while at the

close of the day of his flight he lay encamped on the banks of the Jordan.

PSALM XLII.

“ As the hart panteth after the water-brooks,  
 So panteth my soul after Thee, O God !  
 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God :  
 When shall I come and appear before God ?  
 My tears have been my meat day and night,  
 While they continually say unto me, Where is Thy  
 God ?

When I remember these things, I pour out my soul  
 in me :

For I had gone with the multitude,  
 I went with them to the house of God,  
 With the voice of joy and praise,  
 With a multitude that kept holy day.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?  
 And why art thou disquieted within me ?  
 Hope thou in God : for I shall yet praise Him  
 For the help of His countenance.

O my God, my soul is cast down within me :  
 Therefore will I remember Thee from the land of  
 Jordan,  
 And of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.  
 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy water-  
 spouts ;  
 All Thy waves and billows are gone over me.  
 Yet the Lord will command His loving-kindness in  
 the day-time,  
 And in the night His song shall be with me,  
 And my prayer unto the God of my life.  
 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast Thou forgotten  
 me ?

Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy ?

As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me ;

While they say daily unto me, Where is thy God ?

Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?

And why art thou disquieted within me ?

Hope thou in God : for I shall yet praise Him,

Who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

PSALM XLIII.

" Judge me, O God,

And plead my cause against an ungodly nation :

O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

For Thou art the God of my strength :

Why dost Thou cast me off ?

Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy ?

O send out Thy light and Thy truth :

Let them lead me ;

Let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles.

Then will I go unto the altar of God,

Unto God my exceeding joy :

Yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God !

Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?

And why art thou disquieted within me ?

Hope in God : for I shall yet praise Him,

Who is the health of my countenance, and my God." \*

\* It is generally believed that this should be read as a part of the preceding Psalm ; that they were intended to form but one composition.



## PSALM CXLIII.

“Hear my prayer, O Lord! give ear to my supplications:  
In Thy faithfulness answer me, and in Thy righteousness.

And enter not into judgment with Thy servant;  
For in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.

For the enemy hath persecuted my soul;  
He hath smitten my life down to the ground;  
He hath made me to dwell in darkness,  
As those that have been long dead.  
Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me;  
My heart within me is desolate.

I remember the days of old;  
I meditate on all Thy works;  
I muse on the work of Thy hands.  
I stretch forth my hands;  
My soul thirsteth after Thee, as a thirsty land.

Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit faileth:  
Hide not Thy face from me,  
Lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.  
Cause me to hear Thy loving-kindness in the  
morning:

For in Thee do I trust:  
Cause me to know the way in which I should walk;  
For I lift up my soul unto Thee.  
Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies:  
I flee unto Thee to hide me.  
Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God:  
Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of  
uprightness.

Quicken me, O Lord, for Thy name's sake:  
For Thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of  
trouble.

And of Thy mercy cut off mine enemies,

And destroy all them that afflict my soul :  
For I am Thy servant."

The events of this day are given more at large, and occupy a greater space on the sacred record than is allowed to those of any other day in the whole of the sacred history. Nor need we wonder at the importance with which this narrative is invested by the sacred writer, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The calamities inflicted on the pious king were of the most severe character possible. Stript of his kingdom and property, he was compelled to fly for his life from the bloodthirsty vengeance of his most beloved son. He had to suffer all this affliction in a state of mental and physical exhaustion, the severity of which it is difficult to estimate. He and his household had, during the day, performed a journey on foot, in that climate, of about twenty-five miles. And during all this journey the king's mind was kept in continual excitement. It is clear from the Psalms that Shimei was not the only one, although he might have been the most ferocious, who loaded him with reproaches, and cried unto him, "Where is thy God?" In lying down to take some rest, after the sufferings and labours of such a day, the mind was thrown on its own resources; and its state of feeling would clearly indicate the mental calibre of the man, and the religious condition of the individual. How, then, do we find the mind of David occupied at such a crisis? He is not so crushed by his adversities as to sink into hopeless despondency and despair. He does not calculate on the military or financial resources which he may, by diligence and exertion, collect for his defence. He rises superior to all his afflictions and privations, and seeks consolation, and looks for means of deliverance, such as men in general would never think of, in such circumstances.

Nor did this strange conduct arise from apathy, or any want of a just appreciation of the full extent of the evils he was called on to suffer. He felt the ingratitude and power of "an ungodly nation." He bitterly lamented the treason and malignity of "the deceitful and unjust man." Lying on the ground, with the noise of the rapids of the Jordan sounding in his ears, he recognised in their tumultuous uproar a striking representation of the calamities he had to undergo; and exclaimed, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts. All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me." Yet in all this he saw no reason why his confidence in God should be shaken, or even his peace of mind disturbed; so he quietly inquires, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." It is true that he pines under a deep sense of want: he keenly feels the pressure of an urgent and absolute necessity. But this is not for his restoration to kingly glory, nor to the possession of royal ease, honour, or wealth. It was a want the worldling feels not, and which men in general lightly esteem; it was for a restoration to the hallowed privilege of sacred worship, to his usual means of communion with God and union with His people in the sanctuary. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" The ruling element of David's religion,—his strong faith in God,—is conspicuous in this, as in many other seasons of deep sorrow and trial. The issue of this calamitous rebellion never seemed doubtful to his mind. He knew not the means or manner of his deliverance; he could not see through the dark gloom that sur-

rounded the present, and enveloped the future ; but he knew God's covenant of mercy with him, and he believed, and, although his soul was cast down, yet he so fully realized the certainty of his restoration, that looking over the valley of the Jordan, and casting his eyes on the lofty peaks of Mount Hermon, and the little hill which rose behind him, he held fast his confidence in God ; and although so far removed from the sanctuary that he loved, he was determined not to be wholly separated from God ; and hence he exclaimed, " I will remember Thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." \* But David not only realized the Divine presence in his distress, but felt assured of deliverance : " Hope thou in God : I shall yet praise Him." And this language is repeated as often as his spirit sinks ; and though his mind is crushed, his faith rears its mighty power, and reiterates, " I shall yet praise Him ; He is the health of my countenance, and my God."

The night passed, the morning dawned. The whole of the company had crossed the river, and no hostile force was in sight, not even on the western hills. David returned his thanksgiving to God, for the protection and rest which he had experienced, in his own peculiar manner :—

## PSALM III.

" Lord, how are they increased that trouble me !  
 Many are they that rise up against me.  
 Many there be which say of my soul,  
 There is no help for him in God.

But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me ;

\* Or, " the little hill."

My glory, and the lifter up of mine head.  
I cried unto the Lord with my voice,  
And He heard me out of His holy hill.  
I laid me down and slept ;  
I awaked ; for the Lord sustained me.  
I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,  
That have set themselves against me round about.  
Arise, O Lord ; save me, O my God :  
For Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the  
cheek bone ;  
Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.  
Salvation belongeth unto the Lord :  
Thy blessing is upon Thy people."

After such rest as the soldiers and the crowd of friendly adherents could obtain, the whole body proceeded towards Mahanaim, which city they reached after a most wearisome march of about thirty miles. It is needless to dwell on the state of exhaustion and suffering by which the king and the people were oppressed at the close of this journey. Such a harassing journey, with scarcely any rest at night, would be sufficient to break down the strength of hardy soldiers : what amount of suffering must it then have inflicted on persons unaccustomed to violent or long-continued exertion, and especially on women and children? When arrived at this city, however, their wants were supplied ; and in a fortified town they were safe from any sudden surprise from the enemy.

Here the spirits of the king were revived by the appearance and proffered good offices of devoted and powerful friends. Shobi, the son of Nahash, king of Ammon, waited on him with presents. The aid afforded to a sovereign in such an emergency by a tributary so powerful in resources as the king of

Ammon, must be taken as sufficient evidence of the generosity with which he had been treated, and of the gratitude which these benefits had called forth. Machir, also, the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, whom Josephus calls "chief of the country of Gilead," and who had generously provided for Mephibosheth from the time of his father's death until he was invited to court by David; (2 Sam. ix. 4, 5;) and Barzillai, the noble and wealthy Gileadite of Rogelim;—these princely individuals waited upon the king, and supplied all his wants. The list of articles with which they furnished the exhausted travellers form no inconsiderable commissariat for such an army, with all its attendants.

Arrived in this place of comparative security, and provided with provisions for himself and his people, David betook himself to rest, after having in his usual manner acknowledged the Divine goodness, and implored further protection and blessing.

## PSALM IV.

"Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness!  
Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress;  
Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory  
into shame?

How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?  
But know that the Lord hath set apart him that  
is godly for Himself.

The Lord will hear when I call unto Him.

Stand in awe, and sin not:

Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and  
be still,

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,  
 And put your trust in the Lord.  
 There be many that say, Who will show us any  
 good?  
 Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance  
 upon us.  
 Thou hast put gladness in my heart,  
 More than in the time that their corn and their  
 wine increased.  
 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep ;  
 For Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

PSALM LXI.

" Hear my cry, O God !  
 Attend unto my prayer.  
 From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee,  
 When my heart is overwhelmed :  
 Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.  
 For Thou hast been a shelter for me,  
 And a strong tower from the enemy.  
 I will abide in Thy tabernacle for ever :  
 I will trust in the covert of Thy wings.

For Thou, O God, hast heard my vows ;  
 Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear  
 Thy name.  
 Thou wilt prolong the king's life :  
 And his years as many generations.  
 He shall abide before God for ever :  
 O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve  
 him.  
 So will I sing praise unto Thy name for ever,  
 That I may daily perform my vows."

At Mahanaim, David not only had the defences and resources of a large fortified city at his disposal, but also the means of increasing the strength of his little army. He had previously placed a Hebrew garrison in Damascus, and others throughout Edom. (2 Sam. viii. 6-14.) He could, therefore, in this pressing emergency, recall these, or a part of them; and also, in all probability, obtain military aid from the well-disposed in those countries. It is very probable that by these means his forces might have been considerably augmented. Nor should it be forgotten that Joab and Abishai, the generals who, under the king, had the principal command of the Hebrew armies in the Syrian, Edomite, and Ammonite wars, were now, with David, devoting their utmost energies and influence in his support. They would know perfectly what resources the king could command in all the countries which had been brought into subjection to the Hebrews a few years before; and they also knew the most efficient means of turning all these to the best account. And there can be little doubt that the diligent use of all these agencies enabled the king in a short time to bring into the field an army able to meet the forces of the usurper with every prospect of a successful issue. While his generals were thus employed, David was occupied in deep communings with his own heart, and with God. At this time he embodied his feelings, prayers, and thanksgivings, in Psalms v., lxii., lxxxvi., and lxix.

While the king and his generals were thus preparing for their defence at Mahanaim, Absalom was employed with equal diligence in making himself secure in possession of the kingdom. Having assumed the government of the country, he got himself formally anointed king; (2 Sam. xix. 10;) but he had



lost his ablest, and only honest, counsellor. After Absalom had heard the conflicting advice of Ahithophel and Hushai, and decided on acting on the judgment of the latter, Ahithophel immediately left the court, returned to his house, set his affairs in order, and hanged himself. He was not only intensely mortified that the counsel of Hushai should be preferred to his own, but he clearly saw in the course adopted by the rebel prince the certain ruin of his cause. He was fully convinced that the frenzied enthusiasm with which the cause of the usurper had been taken up would soon cool and evaporate; and that the sober sense and sound judgment of the nation would then again rally around the venerable king; so that the only chance for Absalom was in instant action,—in fact, in doing what Ahithophel proposed, cutting off the king before the nation had time to return to its equilibrium of reason.

How long the usurper was engaged in making the necessary preparations for assailing his father, we are not informed. Various speculations on the point have been propounded, but all are destitute of authority. At length, however, an army was collected, placed under the command of his cousin Amasa, and marched toward Mahanaim. But, by the policy which Absalom had adopted, all the advantages which the seer of Giloh had counted on having in his favour were now transferred to the royal army. If David had been pursued on the day of his flight from Jerusalem, he would have been overtaken when weary and exhausted, and while his troops were crippled by a long and fatiguing journey. Now, the royal army was in a state of perfect rest and vigour, while the rebels would have to engage them after a long and wearisome march; but, what was of far more importance, the king's generals had a

perfect knowledge of the ground, and were in circumstances to select the position on which the battle was to be fought.

At first the king intended to command his troops in person; but, when this was named, his friends would not hear of it, and insisted that he should remain under cover of the fortifications of the city. He then divided his army into three divisions, placing the first under the command of Joab, the second under his brother Abishai, and the third he intrusted to Ittai, the faithful Philistine chief. In all the various vicissitudes to which he was exposed by this unnatural rebellion, David's faith seems never to have failed him. Sensible of his danger, and instant in prayer, he nevertheless always seems to have had a strong confidence that God would interpose on his behalf, and work out deliverance for him. So, when his troops under their respective generals marched out of Mahanaim for the scene of battle and slaughter, we hear from him no exhortation to bravery or heroism on his behalf; his mind seems perfectly at ease as to the issue of the conflict; all his concern centres in his rebel son, and his oft-repeated injunction to his officers, heard by all his soldiers, was, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom."

When the royal army had left the city, and was on the way to the battle-field, David returned to his favourite pious exercise of embodying his feelings in sacred song. These are preserved in

PSALM LXX.

"Make haste, O God, to deliver me!  
 Make haste to help me, O Lord!  
 Let them be ashamed and confounded  
 That seek after my soul:

Let them be turned backward, and put to confusion,  
That desire my hurt.  
Let them be turned back for a reward of their  
shame  
That say, Aha! Aha!  
Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in  
Thee :  
And let such as love Thy salvation say continually,  
Let God be magnified!  
But I am poor and needy :  
Make haste unto me, O God :  
Thou art my help and my deliverer ;  
O Lord, make no tarrying.”

PSALM LXXI.

“ In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust :  
Let me never be put to confusion.  
Deliver me in Thy righteousness, and cause me to  
escape :  
Incline Thine ear unto me, and save me.  
Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may  
continually resort :  
Thou hast given commandment to save me ;  
For Thou art my rock and my fortress.  
Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the  
wicked,  
Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.  
For Thou art my hope, O Lord God ;  
Thou art my trust from my youth.  
  
Cast me not off in the time of old age ;  
Forsake me not when my strength faileth.  
For mine enemies speak against me ;  
And they that lay wait for my soul take counsel  
together,

Saying, God hath forsaken him :  
 Persecute and take him ;  
 For there is none to deliver him.  
 O God, be not far from me :  
 O my God, make haste for my help !  
 Let them be confounded and consumed  
 That are adversaries to my soul ;  
 Let them be covered with reproach and dishonour  
 That seek my hurt.

Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles,  
 Shalt quicken me again,  
 And shalt bring me up again from the depths of the  
 earth.

Thou shalt increase my greatness,  
 And comfort me on every side.  
 I will also praise Thee with the psaltery,  
 Even Thy truth, O my God.  
 Unto Thee will I sing with the harp, O Thou Holy  
 One of Israel !  
 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee ;  
 And my soul which Thou hast redeemed.  
 My tongue also shall talk of Thy righteousness all  
 the day long.  
 For they are confounded, for they are brought unto  
 shame,  
 That seek my hurt."

It is a singular and interesting fact, that although the account we have of this battle is very brief, yet, by comparing the statement of Scripture with that given by the Jewish historian, we have the means of knowing, fully and accurately, the military tactics which led to the decisive victory obtained by the army of David. The sacred writer records the case thus: "So the

people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim; where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men. For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured." (2 Sam. xviii. 6-8.) The Jewish historian gives the following account. "Then did Joab put his army in battle array over against the enemy in the Great Plain, where he had a wood behind him. Now David's men were conquerors, as superior in strength and skill in war; so they followed the others as they fled through the forests and valleys; some they took prisoners, and others they slew, and more in the flight than in the battle."\* From these accounts we elicit the following facts. 1. The battle was begun in the plain, and by the division of the army under the command of Joab. 2. The decisive part of the battle was fought in the wood. 3. This wood was at the commencement of the fight in the rear of the victorious army. 4. The ruinous defeat of the rebel army was occasioned by the wood. 5. There were more of the rebel army slain in the disorder of the flight than in the battle. 6. From what is said respecting the messengers who took tidings of the battle to David, it is clear that the field of battle was at some distance from the city.

From these facts, we think it may be safely concluded that Joab and his brother officers had carefully considered the best mode of meeting the rebel army with the greatest advantage, and had decided on a plan which proved eminently successful. In the ordinary course of warfare, we should not find that a battle

\* JOSEPHUS, *Antiq.*, vii.

would be fought in a wood which, at the beginning of the conflict, was in the rear of the victorious army. This single fact is indicative of some strategy on the part of the victors ; and such was, unquestionably, the case here. Joab, determined to avail himself of every advantage the state of the country offered, having informed himself of the approach of the enemy, led out his forces so as to place the wood of Ephraim in his rear. The divisions of the army under Abishai and Ittai were then concealed in the extreme sides of the wood, leaving the division of Joab alone to begin the battle. On the approach of Absalom's army, Joab engaged them ; but, being greatly outnumbered, he, according to the plan laid down, gradually retreated under cover of the wood, where he was eagerly pursued by the rebel forces. Having retreated sufficiently for his purpose, Joab made a stand against the enemy, when the divisions of Abishai and Ittai assailed the rebels on their flanks, and thus threw them into inextricable confusion. From this time, it is no longer a battle, but a rout. The superior numbers of the rebels availed them nothing. The royal troops in compact bodies bear down all before them ; and, as Josephus says, "more were slain in the flight than in the battle." In this confusion, Absalom, to avoid a party of the royal troops, rode his mule under the thick branches of a tree, which, becoming entangled in the long hair of which the prince was proud, held him fast, while the mule passed away from under him, leaving him suspended.

In this state Absalom was found by one of the royal soldiers, who communicated the intelligence to Joab. He, taking no notice of the earnest entreaty of the king on behalf of his son, immediately put him to death, and had his body cast into a pit, and buried

beneath a large heap of stones. Having effected this, he sounded the trumpet, calling off his troops from the pursuit of the rebels. Thus fell this ungrateful son and rebellious prince. He was, as we have seen, surrounded by strong temptations and various circumstances which, operating on a proud and ambitious spirit, led him into a course of infamous crime, and brought him to a miserable and disgraceful end.

On the death of the usurper, Ahimaaz, the son of the high priest Zadok, who accompanied Joab in the battle, requested that he might be allowed to carry tidings to the king of the successful issue of the conflict. But Joab refused, saying, "Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, because the king's son is dead." Rough and hardy soldier as Joab was, he would not allow a sincere friend of David to take to him intelligence which, although announcing victory, was accompanied by information of the most distressing character. So he called Cushy,\* and directed him to go to the king, and tell him what he had seen. Cushy obeyed with alacrity; but, as soon as he was gone, Ahimaaz repeated his request, that he might also be allowed to run; and, being urgent, he at length obtained a reluctant assent. It would seem that by taking a more favourable route, (2 Sam. xviii. 23,) he was enabled to reach the gate of the city some time before Cushy. The watchman on the gate saw the two men running towards the place, and told the king that, from the peculiar action of the foremost, he thought it to be Ahimaaz. David replied, "He is a good man, and bringeth good tidings." As soon as he approached, he shouted to the king, "All is well!" and falling to the earth, he exclaimed, "Blessed be the

\* Probably an Ethiopian servant.

Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king." But when David inquired, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" he who so eagerly desired to run with tidings, did not dare to reveal the whole truth; his heart utterly failed him, and he sheltered himself by giving an evasive reply. Just then Cushai came, and said, "Tidings, my lord the king; for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee." But David again showed the great anxiety that rested on his mind, by inquiring, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" to which the messenger replied, "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is." The paternal heart of David, on receiving this intelligence, poured out a gush of feeling, which renders the scene one of the most remarkable of his life. Hastening to the chamber of the watchman, over the gate, the king retired, weeping and crying aloud, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The excess of David's grief on this occasion, the extent to which the king was lost in the father, had nearly produced very serious consequences. When his troops returned to the city from the field of battle, where they had won a hardly-earned victory, they found their sovereign—instead of joyfully receiving them, and acknowledging their devotion and bravery—buried in profound affliction on account of the most important event of the day. Joab saw the impolicy of this conduct, and anticipated its probable results. So proceeding to the royal presence, he expostulated with the king, in the blunt and daring manner which he not unfrequently assumed. "Thou hast," said he, "shamed



this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines ; in that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants : for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well." He then urged the king to arise, and go forth, and speak encouragingly to his troops ; assuring him that, unless he did so, every man of them would desert him that night. Roused by this appeal, the king went forth, and took his seat at the gate ; when all his people crowded around, congratulating him, and rejoicing at the success of the day.

He who had so often turned his sorrows into songs, and sung of mercy in the midst of judgment, was not likely to allow such an event as this great victory to take place, without celebrating it in poetry, and pouring forth his grateful love to God in the sweetest strains his gifted mind could command. We accordingly find one of the most brilliant, powerful, and pious of his odes composed on this occasion :—

## PSALM CXLIV.

“ Blessed be the Lord my strength,  
 Which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to  
 fight :  
 My goodness, and my fortress ;  
 My high tower, and my deliverer ;  
 My shield, and He in whom I trust ;  
 Who subdueth my people under me.

Lord, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of  
him!

Or the son of man, that Thou makest account of  
him!

Man is like to vanity :

His days are as a shadow that passeth away.

Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down :  
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

Cast forth lightning, and scatter them :

Shoot out Thine arrows, and destroy them.

Send Thine hand from above ;

Rid me, and deliver me out of great waters,

From the hand of strange children ;

Whose mouth speaketh vanity,

And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

I will sing a new song unto Thee, O God :

Upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings

Will I sing praises unto Thee.

It is He that giveth salvation unto kings :

Who delivereth David His servant from the hurtful  
sword.

Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange  
children,

Whose mouth speaketh vanity,

And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood :

That our sons may be as plants grown up in their  
youth ;

That our daughters may be as corner stones,

Polished after the similitude of a palace :

That our garners may be full, affording all manner  
of store :

That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten  
thousands in our streets :

That our oxen may be strong to labour ;  
That there be no breaking in, nor going out ;  
That there be no complaining in our streets.  
Happy is that people, that is in such a case :  
Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### FROM THE TERMINATION OF ABSALOM'S REBELLION TO THE END OF DAVID'S WARS.

THE victory obtained by the royal army over the rebel forces in the wood of Ephraim was decisive as to the fate of the rebellion. With the death of Absalom, who was its author and object, every reason for the insurrection was removed, and every hope of succeeding with it perished.

It now only remained for means to be devised to secure the return of the king to his capital and government, and to restore harmony and unity among the thousands of Israel. To effect the first of these objects the king sent messengers to Zadok and Abiathar the priest, requesting them to suggest to the elders of Judah that they should request the immediate return of the king. To insure the success of this measure, David also took another step, which has called forth conflicting opinions as to its wisdom and propriety. Although the death of Absalom was justified by every principle of policy and of military law, it was on the part of Joab a flagrant violation of a positive command from the king, and, it is believed, a crime which the king never lost sight of. Then there was another circumstance which must not be forgotten. Amasa, the captain-general of Absalom's army, had with the remnant of his host returned to Jerusalem, and was in military possession of the capital. It was of infinite importance to David to secure an immediate an

peaceful return to the seat of his government. Under these circumstances, David sent to Amasa, who was a son of his sister Abigail, reminding him of their near relationship, and assuring him that he should have the honourable post of captain of the host in the place of Joab. The effect of these communications was that when the priests brought the case before the elders of Judah, seconded by the influence of Amasa, who was also of that tribe, "the heart of all the men in Judah" bowed under this influence "as the heart of one man;" and they sent messengers to the king, requesting him to return with all his servants,—a request with which he gladly complied. On the receipt of this message, he composed the following jubilant song of praise.

## PSALM CXXII.

"I was glad when they said unto me,  
 Let us go into the house of the Lord.  
 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.  
 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact  
 together:  
 Whither the tribes go up,  
 The tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of  
 Israel,  
 To give thanks unto the name of the Lord.  
 For there are set thrones of judgment,  
 The thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
 They shall prosper that love thee.  
 Peace be within thy walls,  
 And prosperity within thy palaces.  
 For my brethren and companions' sakes,  
 I will now say, Peace be within thee.

Because of the house of the Lord our God  
I will seek thy good."

The necessary measures having been arranged, David departed from Mahanaim, on his return to Jerusalem. And this journey, although joyous, was as rich in interesting incidents as had been his flight. The finest scene in this exciting drama is the appearance presented by the venerable Barzillai, attending his sovereign on his return to the banks of the Jordan. After having supplied the wants of the king, and extensively ministered to the comfort of the royal family in their distress, the wealthy Gileadite, although tottering with age, would not leave his sovereign until he had seen him safely across the river, and received by his people into the heart of his dominions in peace. The manner in which this eminent old man declined the invitation of the king to go with him to Jerusalem and to reside at his court, is beautiful in its truth and simplicity. With mutual blessings the king and his noble friend separated, and Chimham, the son of Barzillai, attended the king to Jerusalem.

Just before he reached the Jordan, David was met by Shimei, now apparently as abject in his penitence as he was before blustering and profane in the abuse of his sovereign when in distress; and notwithstanding the remonstrance of Abishai, the king so far forgave him as to spare his life, and to swear to him that he should not be slain. It is, however, a significant circumstance in the submission of this offender that he came to ask pardon of the king with a thousand men at his back. Such a retinue as this might have been intended to show the great consideration in which he was held in his tribe; but it certainly was calculated also to indicate the hazard to which any attempt to

punish him might expose the king. It is very evident that David was at this time in no condition to provoke the hostility of any considerable number of his subjects. From the account it appears that Ziba, the servant of Saul, with his fifteen sons and twenty servants, met the king in company with Shimei: this is another fact which indicates how extensively the tribe of Benjamin sympathized with the offender. These all passed over the river before the king: he, accompanied by his family and friends, followed in a boat, or on a bridge of boats.

Soon afterward Mephibosheth met the royal *cortège*; he "had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day that he came again in peace." It appears that the body of men sent by the tribe of Judah to conduct the king back to his capital, met the royal procession near the Jordan: these were also accompanied by many from the other tribes of Israel; and they, escorting the king, proceeded toward Jerusalem, until, at Gilgal, they met a large body of men from the ten tribes. For while Zadok, Abiathar, and Amasa were persuading the people of Judah to promote the return of the sovereign, a spontaneous and extensive movement was taking place among the other tribes for effecting the same purpose. For "all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom. And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?" (2 Sam. xix. 9, 10.) The result of this movement was the collection of a large body of men, who went to Gilgal to meet the king, and

to conduct him to his capital. But on their arrival there, they found that the king was on his return to Jerusalem, attended by his own troops, and by those which had come to him from the tribe of Judah. The men of Israel complained to those of Judah, with much bitterness, that they had not been consulted respecting the return of the king, as this was an important measure, in which the whole nation should have acted in concert. The men of Judah replied that they were perfectly justified in the action they had taken, the king being "near of kin" to them; and that they had acted with perfect disinterestedness, not having received any reward or provisions from the king. This reply, however, did not satisfy the men of Israel; who contended that, as David was sovereign of the whole nation, they had ten parts in him, and ought to have been consulted, and allowed to act in concert with their brethren in the king's restoration, and not to have been slighted or despised. Neither party, however, would give way; so they separated in anger: "And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel."

Unhappily for the peace of the kingdom, there happened to be at that time among the men of Israel a restless, ambitious spirit, in the person of Sheba, the son of Bichri, of the tribe of Benjamin. He, taking advantage of this hostile feeling, blew a trumpet, and proclaimed, "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel." And such was the excited feeling prevalent at the time that, we are told, "every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba."

This extensive defection threatened the most serious consequences, unless it could be promptly checked before it had time to develope itself into a military



rebellion. David was well aware of this, and consequently hastened his return to Jerusalem, made some necessary arrangements, and, investing Amasa with the dignity of captain of the host, or general-in-chief of the army, ordered him to assemble the men of Judah within three days, and to appear with them before the king. We have no means of knowing why this command was not obeyed. Whether Amasa hesitated to undertake the office, or the men distrusted and disliked him, or from some other cause, the three days expired, and the required muster was not made. David, feeling anxious at the delay, and apparently determined to supersede Joab, on account of his conduct in the death of Absalom, called on Abishai to collect what troops were available, and to pursue Sheba. He immediately complied: and placing himself at the head of the Cherethites, Pelethites, and a body of troops, spoken of as "Joab's men," with all the mighty men called "David's worthies," and accompanied by his brother Joab, he marched in pursuit of the rebel. He had not gone farther than Gibeon, when he fell in with Amasa, leading the troops which he had collected for this service. The two bodies of troops here became united, and Amasa placed himself at their head, as he was fully entitled to do, by the appointment which he had received from the king.

It seems that this was more than the fiery spirit of Joab could bear. And it certainly was a strange sight to see the man who had been the chief commander of the royal troops in the battle which crushed the rebellion, and restored David to his crown and kingdom, marching as a subordinate, while the person who fought in that desperate struggle as general-in-chief of the rebel army was now intrusted with the chief command of the royal forces. Such an arrangement

as this would have excited a person of less violent temperament than Joab. He was moved by it to instant action. Going up to Amasa, he hailed him with the cordial greeting, "Art thou in health, my brother?" and, taking him by the beard with his right hand as if to kiss him, he at the same moment smote him with a sword, which he held unperceived in his other hand, with such violence that he instantly fell dead. Leaving the murdered Amasa weltering in his blood, Joab placed himself at the head of the army, and led it on in pursuit of Sheba. And he did this with such spirit and energy, that the rebellious chief had no time to organize any effective resistance but fled through the country until he threw himself into the fortified city of Abel-Beth-maachah, in the extreme north-west of Palestine. Joab immediately invaded the city, and proceeded to attempt the destruction of the fortifications.

Happily, however, there happened to be in the city a woman of more than ordinary wisdom and sagacity and no sooner had Joab begun to invade the place, than she appeared on the wall, and expostulated with him on his disposition to swallow up and destroy the inheritance of the Lord. The general earnestly disclaimed any such purpose, but told her that Sheba had raised his hand against king David; and that if he were given up, he would immediately withdraw from the siege. The woman promised that his request should be complied with; and, going to the people of the city, gave them such a representation of the case, that they at once decapitated the rebel, and threw his head over the wall to Joab; upon which he raised the siege, and returned to the king at Jerusalem.

Immediately after the recital of these events, the sacred record adds, "Now Joab was over all the host

of Israel, and Benaiah was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites." (2 Sam. xx. 23.) So that David, reigning over all Israel, and fully restored to sovereign power, could not carry out his avowed purpose of removing Joab from the chief command of the army. The indomitable prowess and consummate ability of this daring soldier kept him in the highest military office, notwithstanding the extreme antipathy of the king himself. The record of the other fact in connexion with this, is significant. Benaiah was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites. No member of Joab's family had any authority over the king's body-guard. This was commanded by the brave and faithful Benaiah. So that, while Joab had the supreme command of the ordinary forces, the royal person was not in his power, but guarded by a faithful body of men under a brave and able chief.

Restored to his crown and capital in peace, the king gave expression to his grateful feelings in the following hymns of praise.

## PSALM XXVI.

" Judge me, O Lord ;  
 For I have walked in mine integrity :  
 I have trusted also in the Lord ; therefore I shall  
 not slide.  
 Examine me, O Lord, and prove me ;  
 Try my reins and my heart.

For Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes :  
 And I have walked in Thy truth.  
 I have not sat with vain persons,  
 Neither will I go in with dissemblers.  
 I have hated the congregation of evil doers ;

And will not sit with the wicked.  
 I will wash my hands in innocency :  
 So will I compass Thine altar, O Lord :  
 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving,  
 And tell of all Thy wondrous works.  
 Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house,  
 And the place where Thine honour dwelleth.  
 Gather not my soul with sinners,  
 Nor my life with bloody men :  
 In whose hands is mischief,  
 And their right hand is full of bribes.  
 But as for me, I will walk in my integrity :  
 Redeem me, and be merciful unto me.  
 My foot standeth in an even place :  
 In the congregation will I bless the Lord."

## PSALM XXVII.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom shall  
 I fear ?  
 The Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall  
 I be afraid ?  
 When the wicked (even my enemies and my foes)  
 came upon me to eat up my flesh,  
 They stumbled and fell.  
 Though a host should encamp against me,  
 My heart shall not fear :  
 Though war should rise against me,  
 In this will I be confident.  
 One thing have I desired of the Lord,  
 That will I seek after ;  
 That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the  
 days of my life,  
 To behold the beauty of the Lord,  
 And to inquire in His temple.

For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion :

In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me ;  
He shall set me upon a rock.

And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me :

Therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy ;

I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice :

Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face ;

My heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

Hide not Thy face far from me,

Put not Thy servant away in anger :

Thou hast been my help ; leave me not,

Neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

When my father and my mother forsake me,

Then the Lord will take me up.

Teach me Thy way, O Lord,

And lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

Deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies :

For false witnesses are risen up against me,

And such as breathe out cruelty.

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord

In the land of the living.

Wait on the Lord :

Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart :

Wait, I say, on the Lord."

Having detailed the rise, progress, and termination

of these rebellions, it is not unreasonable to pause and inquire how they could have been possible. David had subdued all his enemies in all the surrounding countries, and reduced them at least to tributary subjection, so that the authority of the Hebrew state was paramount in Western Asia. And, in addition to this extension of his power abroad, he had done much to improve the civil polity of his own country; and had not only extended and improved its religious institutions, but had, as far as possible, brought these improvements to bear on the several tribes for the purpose of fusing them into one compact, united nation. In these circumstances it seems strange that the first action of Absalom should have been sufficiently formidable to drive the king precipitately from his capital; and that after the death of Absalom an obscure individual, or, at least, a man unknown before in the history of the nation, should, by a single proclamation, have had sufficient influence to detach from their allegiance all the men of Israel who had come to welcome the return of the king, and thus to cause at least a dangerous insurrection. This proneness to disloyalty to a sovereign who had done so much for his country seems to indicate the existence of some peculiar cause or causes which do not appear on the surface of the history, and which merit a brief but explicit solution.

The Divine appointment of Saul to the sovereignty of all the tribes of Israel, and his possession of royal power through the long period of forty years, had, to a great extent, given to his family and the tribe of Benjamin, to which it belonged, a *prestige*, accompanied by aspirations after regal dignity and power, which were admitted and recognised by great numbers in the other tribes. It was this mainly by which Abner maintained Ishbosheth at the head of the ten tribes

for seven years; and it had not died out when David had established the military ascendancy of the Hebrews over the neighbouring nations. Proofs of this fact are seen in the suspicions entertained of Mephibosheth, in Ziba's slander of him, in the conduct of Shimei, and also in the treason of Sheba, who was also of the tribe of Benjamin.

Another fruitful cause of disunion among the Hebrews was the power of the tribe of Ephraim, and its intense jealousy of Judah. Probably the terms of the blessing which Jacob pronounced on the sons of Joseph, and more particularly the benediction which, when dying, he pronounced on the head of this tribe, greatly encouraged their aspirations to dominion in Israel. And these ambitious hopes and desires were strengthened by the great number to which the men of this tribe were multiplied. Whatever may be thought of these as causes producing a desire and claim for prominent distinction in Israel, it is certain that this tribe took a leading part in the affairs of the Hebrew people, and fully expected to be consulted in all affairs of moment, and to co-operate in all matters of great public interest. It was so in the case of Gideon, (Judges viii. 1,) and of Jephthah, (xii. 1,) and again on the return of David. (2 Sam. xix. 41-43.) The complaint always evinced the same spirit, and was sometimes put forth in terms indicative of great annoyance: "Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not?" "Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee?" "Why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in-bringing back the king?"

It is also remarkable that the measures taken by David for uniting all the Hebrew tribes in their religious worship could scarcely have had any but an

irritating effect on this sensitive tribe. When the people, under the conduct of Joshua, had so far subdued the Canaanitish nations that the general war was terminated, the tabernacle of the congregation, containing the ark and the altars of sacrifice and incense, which had previously been located at the head-quarters of the army, was set up at Shiloh, within the allotted portion of the tribe of Ephraim. What determined Joshua in the selection of this place we are not informed. Probably it was on account of its central situation; perhaps because it pertained to the powerful tribe of Ephraim, to which the great Hebrew leader of the day himself belonged. But, whatever the cause which led to the location of the tabernacle at Shiloh, it unquestionably gave great importance to the house of Ephraim, and was highly prized by the people of that tribe. Of the removal of this sacred tent to Nob, and afterward to Gibeon, we know nothing. But, when denuded of the ark, this sacred sanctuary lost the greater portion of its importance; so that, during the time that this sacred coffer remained in the house of Abinadab, neither the tabernacle nor it seemed to exercise much influence on the people.

When, however, David had prepared his tabernacle on Mount Zion, and by placing the ark there had made it the centre of an extensive religious institution, and the seat of a popular and spiritual system of worship, the case was altered: by the proximity of this sanctuary to the Mosaic tabernacle at Gibeon, and to the throne of David and the seat of government at Jerusalem, all the great elements of Hebrew interest and power were concentrated in and about that city, all the means of distinction were removed from the tribe of Ephraim, and it sank down in political and religious importance to the level of the other



tribes. This fact was clearly perceived, and its effects fully appreciated, by the descendants of Joseph. Even the statements of David, put forth as a justification of these charges, although evidently intended to be of an apologetic character, could not have been agreeable to men of Ephraim. Speaking on this subject, David says, "So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. He gave his people over also to the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance.....Moreover, He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which He loved." (Psalm lxxviii. 60-62, 67, 68.)

From all this it is clear that the leading tribe of the house of Joseph, as well as the tribe of Benjamin, was by no means content with its position in the Hebrew kingdom as organized by David. And there can be little doubt that other tribes more or less shared this feeling. It was on a people so circumstanced, that Absalom had to exert his art and to plot his treason. With the graces of a handsome person, his profession of sympathy for the whole people, and his avowed determination to remedy all abuses in the administration of the country, he was able, by a persevering course of flattering attention, to win the favour of the people, withdraw them from their allegiance, attach them to himself, and commence a rebellion with a tolerable prospect of success.

On the return of the king, after the battle in the wood of Ephraim, the men of Israel had two new causes of irritation added to those already mentioned. The friends and relatives of the twenty thousand men who fell in that battle, and who generally doubtless sympa-

thized with the cause for which they fell, would naturally look with displeasure on the return of David and his re-establishment on the throne. And when the complaint of the men of Israel, instead of being met in a conciliatory spirit, as sound policy would have required, was fiercely repelled, the breach was made so serious that it only wanted a leader to create a new schism. This want was supplied by Sheba, who, but for the prompt and energetic action of Joab, might have proved a formidable enemy.

A passage in Hebrew history now presents itself to our attention, of such peculiar difficulty, that very few of our expositors have ventured to offer a full explanation of it. The text says: "There was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites. And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them, What shall I do for you? And wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord? And the Gibeonites said, We will have no silver or gold of Saul or of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you. And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord in Gibeah of Saul. The king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite; and he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in.

the hill before the Lord : and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest." (2 Sam. xxi. 1-6, 8, 9.)

It will be remembered that the Gibeonites were the descendants of a branch of the Hivites, who inhabited that city in the days of Joshua, and who, after the fall of Jericho and Ai, despairing of resisting the power of the Hebrews by force of arms, succeeded by stratagem in making a league with the elders of Israel, by which they obtained a promise on oath that they should not be destroyed : but, inasmuch as this covenant-promise had been obtained by deceit and falsehood, they and their posterity were doomed to perpetual servitude. From the narrative before us it appears that at some period of Saul's reign he had formed a deliberate purpose to destroy or expel from the Hebrew territory the descendants of this race. Hence it is said, "The man who consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel." "For Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah." And it seems, from the terms in which the answer of the Lord was conveyed to David, that the family of Saul was seriously implicated in this wicked purpose ; for it was not only Saul, but his "bloody house," who were denounced as the authors of this wickedness.

As there is no mention of this circumstance in the narrative of Saul's reign, we have no further information respecting the case than is given in the Scripture quoted above ; and, as to the statement of fact, it is only necessary to observe that we feel bound to accept the whole account as of equal truth and authority. This has not always been done. Otherwise respectable writers have received the account as authentic so far

as it speaks of the execution of the seven men : but they regard the Divine communication announcing the cause of the famine, as a pretence and a deception. This opinion is purely arbitrary and unwarranted. If that part of the narrative is untrue, the whole may be untrue.

But although the case presents serious difficulties, as arising out of the operation of a political economy known nowhere but in Israel, it contains nothing but what can be easily harmonized with the peculiar character of the Divine government over the elect people. There is nothing improbable in the crime alleged. Gibeon was situated in the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe of Saul. It was occupied by the descendants of the aboriginal idolaters of Canaan. Now, considering the frequency with which he disobeyed Divine directions, and the necessity which arose for making provision for a large family, it is surely not incredible that he and his children might have held a promise made by Joshua to their ancestors five hundred years before, as of no effect, and have taken measures for destroying them, or at least for expelling them from the country. But, it is asked, why was not the crime punished before? Why was the whole land visited with famine for three successive years on this account? Why, out of all Saul's descendants, were these seven men made the victims of this vengeance?

If, as hinted above, we had to discuss the application of any system of human jurisprudence to human action, we might feel called on to consider these queries. But this is not the case. God was the Law-giver, and in this case certainly the Administrator of Hebrew law. He saw and condemned the crime, from the guilt of which the nation, in all probability, ought long ago to have purged itself. He took a course which brought

the transgression fully before the public mind; and when inquiry was made, He pointed out the cause of the infliction, and the mode of its expiation. This is the statement of the Jewish historian, who relates that the Lord told the king, that if he "would permit such vengeance to be taken as the Gibeonites should desire, He would be reconciled to them, and free the multitude from their miseries." This was done, and the plague ceased.\*

The scriptural answer to all captious objections to this portion of history is, that the theocratic government of the Hebrews in the time of David is a sterling truth, an undoubted reality. The divinely appointed laws of the kingdom were frequently transgressed; but although God sometimes bore with the sin, He at others, as in the case before us, asserted his Divine sovereignty, and enforced the decision of His will. Neither the lapse of time that occurred between the crime and its punishment, nor our inability to connect the seven persons who suffered with the actual slaughter of the Gibeonites, at all affects our view of the case.

Actions directed by short-sighted and fallible man may be fairly open to censure, which yet may be just and right, when ordered by an infinitely good and all-prescient Deity.

If this case had been placed before us as the judgment of David, we should doubt, if not condemn; but to the Divine fiat we reverently submit; for man can only judge from outward appearance, and such evidence as he can obtain, but the Lord not only knows the heart, but can foresee future contingent events, so as not only to be able to do all that is right and necessary to uphold the rectitude of His government, but also cer-

\* JOSEPHUS, *Antiq.*, vii., 12, 1.

tainly to perceive when, and by what means, it can be most effectively done. It was divinely appointed in the days of Abraham, that his seed should have Canaan for their possession; but this possession was not given till the time of Joshua. One reason for this long delay was, that in the days of the father of the faithful the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. The Chaldean captivity was settled in the Divine purpose in Hezekiah's time; and, before the reign of his grandson, Josiah, the sins of the princes and people became so great, as to make the threatened infliction certain. Yet the full accomplishment of this ruin was delayed half a century longer.

In all these cases, there can be no doubt that the ways of the Lord are just and right. And so in the case before us, although we cannot connect the sons of Rizpah and of Merab personally with the crime for which they suffered, if we knew the secret history of these persons, and had a perfect knowledge of the event, we should see in the dealings of God with the case a further proof that, although "clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." (Psalm xvii. 2.)

The removal of the Divine malediction from the country, the return of fruitful showers, and the restoration of the land to beauty and fertility, called forth the grateful strains of the sweet singer of Israel. He gave utterance to his emotions in the following songs of praise:—

## PSALM XXIX.

"Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty,  
Give unto the Lord glory and strength.  
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name;  
Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters :  
 The God of glory thundereth :  
 The Lord is upon many waters.  
 The voice of the Lord is powerful ;  
 The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.  
 The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars ;  
 Yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.  
 He maketh them also to skip like a calf ;  
 Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.  
 The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.  
 The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness ;  
 The Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.  
 The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve,  
 And discovereth the forests :  
 And in His temple doth every one speak of His  
 glory.  
 The Lord sitteth upon the flood ;  
 Yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.  
 The Lord will give strength unto His people ;  
 The Lord will bless His people with peace."

PSALM LXV.

" Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Sion :  
 And unto Thee shall the vow be performed.  
 O Thou that hearest prayer,  
 Unto Thee shall all flesh come.  
 Iniquities prevail against me :  
 As for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them  
 away.  
 Blessed is the man whom Thou choolest,  
 And causest to approach unto Thee, that he may  
 dwell in Thy courts :  
 We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy  
 house,

Even of Thy holy temple.  
By terrible things in righteousness  
Wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation ;  
Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth,  
And of them that are afar off upon the sea :  
Which by His strength setteth fast the mountains ;  
Being girded with power :  
Which stilleth the noise of the seas,  
The noise of their waves, and the tumult of the  
people.  
They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are  
afraid at Thy tokens :  
Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and  
evening to rejoice.  
Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it :  
Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God,  
which is full of water :  
Thou preparest them corn, when Thou hast so pro-  
vided for it.  
Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly :  
Thou settlest the furrows thereof :  
Thou makest it soft with showers :  
Thou blessest the springing thereof.  
Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness ;  
And Thy paths drop fatness.  
They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness :  
And the little hills rejoice on every side.  
The pastures are clothed with flocks ;  
The valleys also are covered over with corn ;  
They shout for joy, they also sing."

Thus the pious monarch celebrated the removal of the crushing judgment from his country, and sang of the power and majesty, the holiness and overflowing goodness and mercy of Jehovah. This is a prevailing



trait in David's character generally throughout his reign,—his recognition of God as his Lord and Ruler, “whose mercy endureth for ever.” David was now just above sixty years of age, and still retained his vigour of body and mind; and both these were soon called into action for the support of his authority, and the continuance of Hebrew supremacy.

It could not escape the notice of the neighbouring nations that the martial power of the Hebrew people was not so great as it had been. Two rebellions, following in quick succession, must have seriously diminished the military strength of the kingdom; and a three years' famine would of necessity have injuriously affected its resources; nor could the fact that there was all but an open rupture between the king and the nominal chief of the army have been concealed, or prevented from exercising a deteriorating effect on the status of the Hebrew nation. This condition of the paramount power appears to have encouraged the Philistine chiefs to attempt the recovery of their independence; and, having formed this purpose, they prepared to put forth a most determined and persevering effort to accomplish their design.

The usual policy observed at this time by powerful nations toward conquered and subject states was very favourable to their object. During the reign of David, and long afterward, when one country subdued another, it was usual to leave the reigning sovereign, or, if he had become incapable, or rendered himself unworthy of confidence, some member of his family, in possession of the government, with his troops and organized institutions intact, with the exception of those who might have been made prisoners or reduced to servitude. But then the re-instated or new governor would be pledged to render to his superior lord a cer-

tain amount of tribute, and to supply any other specified service or homage. This was the state to which the Philistines were reduced. But as, at this time conquered nations were not incorporated into intimate political and social union with the paramount nation as provinces of an empire, but were left generally under rulers of their own country and language, it was by no means uncommon for them to seize any season of weakness or depression in the ruling state to throw off the yoke, and struggle for the assertion of their independence.

The Philistines judged this a favourable opportunity for an attempt of this kind; and, from the nature and length of the contest, it may be inferred that they were aware of the difficulties they would have to encounter, and had made every provision in their power for surmounting them. In the first of these campaigns, David not only commanded the army in person, but took an active part in the battle; and, in doing so, exposed himself to great danger: for, when wearied with his exertions in the fight, he was assailed by Ishbi-benob, a giant Philistine, who thought to have killed him; but he was succoured by the brave Abishai, who slew the giant and delivered the king. So Israel triumphed. But the danger to which the king had been exposed alarmed his faithful soldiers; and they in consequence protested that their sovereign should no more expose himself to the dangers of battle; as they said, "That thou quench not the light of Israel."

Although defeated, the power of the Philistines was not broken. Their army again assembled at Gath when they were led by another gigantic Philistine named Saph: he was also slain; but we have no information as to the result of the battle, which does not

appear to have been decisive; for soon afterward there was another great battle on the same ground, when a brother of Goliath of Gath was the hero of the Philistines. He, however, shared the fate of the others of his race; for he was slain by Elhanan of Bethlehem. This conflict seems to have been very disastrous to the Philistines; for the next battle we hear of was fought under the walls of their capital at Gath.\* Here, again, a man of gigantic stature appeared in the Philistine army, and, like Goliath, boldly defied the armies of Israel; but his profane defiance was of short duration. Jonathan, the son of David's brother Shimeah, probably stimulated by the memory of his uncle's heroism, encountered the giant and slew him. The defeat which the Philistines received on this occasion terminated the war; the city was taken, and this bold and daring people completely subdued; for we hear no more of their troubling the Hebrews during the reigns of David and Solomon. (1 Kings iv. 2; 2 Chron. ix. 26.)

These campaigns terminated the wars of David. He was now approaching old age, but had the pleasure of recovering the martial ascendancy of his country, and retiring from these scenes of conflict in possession of all that extensive dominion which God had promised to the fathers of the Hebrew race. Before leaving this subject, it should be observed that there is an omission in the recital of the events of this war which will strike every attentive student of Hebrew history. The name of Joab, the captain-general of the Hebrew army, is never once mentioned. David, who appears to have thought it unsafe formally to depose him from his command, took the direction of the army

\* Some critics have supposed that all the contests of this war took place near Gath. Some of the copies of the Septuagint, in the version of 2 Sam. xxi. 15-22, read Γέθ, instead of Γόβ.

on himself, and thus prevented the daring son of Zeruah from sharing in the dangers and honours of these campaigns. From what is known of the character of this warrior, it cannot be doubted that this was a great disappointment to him personally, and must have greatly humbled him in public estimation.

As might have been expected, David celebrated the close of his martial career in one of his most sublime sacred odes. But only a part of this refers to the last wars in which he was engaged, and this portion it is not easy to determine. The song itself is found in the second Book of Samuel, (chap. xxii.,) and, as revised for the service of the tabernacle, in the eighteenth Psalm. In the history, the Psalm is introduced thus: "And David spoke unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." And the inscription to the Psalm is the same in substance. So that, as Hengstenberg observes, it "divides all the distresses of David into two great halves, the Sauline ones and the others." \* Acting on this evident principle, we have already given † the first thirty verses of this ode in connexion with the account of David's deliverance from a situation of extreme peril, into which he was thrown by the malignant machinations of Saul. And the remainder is given here, not because there is any positive proof that these stanzas relate to those last wars of David which have been narrated above, but from the internal evidence that some of them clearly refer to those wars; and, being the last, and some of the most dangerous to himself that he ever conducted, it seems certain that

\* Hengstenberg on the Psalms, vol. i., p. 294.

† *Supra*, p. 53.

they would fill a large portion of the royal poet's mind, when celebrating his final triumph over all his enemies.

## PSALM XVIII. 31-50.

“ For who is God save the Lord ?  
Or who is a rock save our God ?

It is God that girdeth me with strength,  
And maketh my way perfect.  
He maketh my feet like hinds' feet,  
And setteth me upon my high places.  
He teacheth my hands to war,  
So that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.  
Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salva-  
tion :

And Thy right hand hath holden me up,  
And Thy gentleness hath made me great.  
Thou hast enlarged my steps under me,  
That my feet did not slip.

I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them :  
Neither did I turn again till they were consumed.  
I have wounded them that they were not able to  
rise :

They are fallen under my feet.  
For Thou hast girded me with strength unto the  
battle :

Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up  
against me.

Thou hast also given me the necks of mine  
enemies ;

That I might destroy them that hate me.

They cried, but there was none to save them :  
Even unto the Lord, but He answered them not.

Then did I beat them small as the dust before the  
 wind :  
 I did cast them out as the dust in the streets.  
 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the  
 people ;  
 And Thou hast made me the head of the heathen :  
 A people whom I have not known shall serve me.  
 As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me ;  
 The strangers shall submit themselves unto me.  
 The strangers shall fade away,  
 And be afraid out of their close places.

The Lord liveth ; and blessed be my Rock :  
 And let the God of my salvation be exalted.  
 It is God that avengeth me,  
 And subdueth the people under me.  
 He delivereth me from mine enemies :  
 Yea, Thou liftest me up above those that rise up  
 against me :  
 Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.  
 Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord,  
 among the heathen,  
 And sing praises unto Thy Name.  
 Great deliverance giveth He to His king ;  
 And showeth mercy to His anointed,  
 To David, and to his seed for evermore."

Thus did this aged monarch offer his thanksgiving to Jehovah for all the success which had crowned his arms, and for all the deliverances and prosperity with which he had been favoured. In the entire Psalm he reviews his whole public life, from the days of his youth, when he was persecuted by Saul, to the time of his old age, when, having crushed the power of all his enemies, and surveying his course throughout, he

glories, not in his own wisdom or power, but in his God. If he can break a bow of steel, it is God that teaches his hands to fight. God is his Rock; God subdued the people under him: He is the God of his salvation. The records of history may be very extensively searched before we shall find a hero equal to David, who in his hoary age renounces his own merit, and ascribes all he is and all he has to the mercy of his God.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE NUMBERING OF THE PEOPLE, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

DAVID was now approaching seventy years of age. He was in a position of happiness and honour to which few statesmen and warriors have attained ; and, according to all human calculation, he might have closed his life and his reign without further anxiety or trouble. No other storm might have opposed his happy voyage through the remainder of his life ; not another ripple have disturbed his future progress. Yet David the good, the wise, the prosperous king of Israel, again falls into sin, grievous sin, and reaps a fearful harvest of bitter and crushing anguish.

The sin of David on this occasion was the numbering of the male population throughout the Hebrew dominions ; or, as it would now be expressed, taking an accurate census of them. If the reader be surprised at hearing this action called a sin, and inquires wherein its iniquity consisted, he will search the pages of Holy Writ in vain for an answer ; and his further researches among critics and commentators will scarcely yield a more satisfactory result. One thing however, seems certain, that the reason why we are left without this information is, that the nature of the crime was so well and so generally understood at the time, that it was not placed on record by the sacred writer. Joab, not always over scrupulous in matters of obedience to Divine law, objected to comply with the king's command, as long as he could venture to do so ; and, even when he yielded, he did not complete the work by counting the tribes of Levi and Benjamin ; “ for th



king's word was abominable to Joab," who regarded it as "a cause of trespass to Israel." (1 Chron. xxi. 3-6.) Josephus and numerous writers following him have regarded the sin of David in this case as having consisted in omitting to comply with the requirement of the Mosaic law bearing on such an enumeration of the people. But, giving every respect to the Jewish historian, as being intimately conversant with the history and manners of his nation, we cannot receive his opinion as a full and satisfactory exposition of the difficulty. The law indeed said, "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man for the ransom of his life unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague amongst them, when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary; a half shekel shall be the offering unto the Lord. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give the offering unto the Lord." (Exod. xxx. 12-14.) And for anything that appears on the face of the record, this requirement might be intended to apply not only to the numbering of the people at Sinai, but also to every future enumeration of them. David does not appear to have regarded this law, or to have applied it in his census; and this has been supposed, on the authority above mentioned, to have constituted his sin.

But there is a serious objection to this theory, in the fact that Joab was decidedly opposed to this numbering of the people, and spoke of it as "a trespass," before the manner of doing it had been considered or arranged. Influenced by this and similar reasons, others have supposed that David wished to place in

strong contrast before the public mind, the vast difference which had arisen between the number and power of the people when he ascended the throne, and the number of the people, and the military strength of the state, toward the close of his reign. But there is also an objection to this solution. From the language employed by Joab, it appears that it was the thing itself, and not the motives or state of mind that led to it, which constituted David's offence.

It seems, therefore, probable that the essential sin of David in this matter was his purpose to establish an absolute military government over the Hebrew people, by which every able-bodied man would, at the command of the king, be subject to military service and discipline, as was the case at Rome in after times. He had already made a regulation, by which twenty-four thousand men were employed on military duty every month. These were relieved by another body of the same number the following month, and so on; so that in the course of the year two hundred and eighty-eight thousand men would be employed in active military duty. These were exclusive of the permanent household troops and body-guards. This would appear to be an army sufficient for all the purposes of national defence, and also to hold in continued subjection the several nations that were tributary to the Hebrew state.

But this did not appear to satisfy David. Notwithstanding the altered condition of the people, he wished to have every able-bodied man, of a suitable age, enrolled for military service, as was the case when the Israelites marched through the wilderness under Moses. By these means, if carried into effect, the king would acquire a more absolute and unlimited control over his subjects, and thus show to the world that he

was at the head of a vast and irresistible military power. Several circumstances slightly touched on in the narrative indicate that this is, to some extent at least, the true solution of the case. When Joab expostulated with the king on this subject, he said, "Are they not all my lord's servants? Why then doth my lord require this thing?" (1 Chron. xxi. 3;) evidently meaning that the people were loyal and obedient, and did not need to be placed in any altered position. But what is specially confirmatory of this view, is the fact that this census was not a civil or religious measure, conducted by the priests or elders of the people, but an extensive military arrangement, or organization, which occupied nine months and twenty days, although neither the tribe of Benjamin nor the Levites were included.

If this theory is correct, it will be evident that the sin of David was not merely a desire to establish a great military power for the purpose of his own personal aggrandisement and glory. This might have been unjust to his people, and have proved the existence and operation of sinful passions in the mind of the king; but it would not, we believe, have drawn down upon David and his people that signal chastisement with which this transgression was visited. In the theocratic government of the Hebrews, God was the supreme Ruler of this nation. As He was the source of all power, His declared will was the statute-law of the kingdom. The king (for the appointment of kings over Israel was contemplated by Moses, Deut. xvii. 14-20) was to act in entire subjection to Jehovah, and to rule only in subordination to His will. We accordingly find that the throne of David and Solomon is called "the throne of the Lord;" (1 Chron. xxix. 23;) and the kingdom is said to be "the kingdom of

the Lord in the hands of the sons of David." (2 Chron. xiii. 8.) David is therefore called, with peculiar emphasis, "the servant of the Lord;" \* and, considered personally, was not the sovereign, but the viceroy, of Israel. He had, consequently, no separate independent legislative power, but was simply charged with unlimited executive authority.† Nor was this an unimportant element in the constitution of the Hebrew kingdom: it was its vital essential principle. It was, from the beginning, designed to make this sovereignty a fit precursor of the reign of Christ; and, for this purpose, the Divine and the human were blended together as intimately as circumstances would permit. Saul having failed to effect this object, David was appointed to the kingly administration in Israel. "He was the root and founder of the kingdom—as a kingdom—in which the Divine and human stood first in an official, as they were ultimately to stand in a personal, union. And to make the preparatory and the final in this respect properly harmonize and adapt themselves to each other, the Lord, in the first instance, ordered matters connected with the institution of the kingly government, so as to render the beginning an image of the end,—typical throughout of Messiah's work and kingdom." ‡

The action of David in numbering the people for military purposes, and by a military commission, was therefore an infraction of the theocratic character of the Hebrew commonwealth, and excluded God from the government of His people.

\* "This appellation is used of David far more frequently than of any other person. Upwards of thirty times it is expressly coupled with David; and in the Psalms he is ever speaking of himself as the Lord's servant."—FAIRBAIRN'S "Typology of Scripture," vol. i., p. 117, *note*.

† WARBURTON'S "Divine Legation," book v., sect. iii.

‡ FAIRBAIRN'S "Typology of Scripture," vol. i., p. 117.

This fact rendered that which might otherwise be regarded as an error, an aggravated sin. It was a departure from all the principles that had hitherto governed David's conduct; and, if passed over lightly, would have destroyed the fitness of the kingdom of David to typify and inaugurate the kingdom of Messiah.

While, therefore, the motive of David in this action might have been sinful, because it evinced ambition, pride, and an inordinate grasping at power, its consequences were still more deeply sinful, in that it would set aside the just prerogatives of God as the King of His people, and mar the first and most prominent step in a grand series of events designed by the special providence of God to make this kingdom the means of adumbrating and setting forth the kingdom of Messiah. This gave great aggravation to his sin.

It is, however, worthy of observation, that before either prophet or priest had spoken to him on the subject, David felt that he had sinned, and confessed and lamented his unfaithfulness. When Joab handed him the tables containing the census, as far as it had been taken, the king's "heart smote him," and "David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done; and now I beseech Thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly." That night was spent in penitence and prayer; and, in the morning, his troubled and anxious mind was still more deeply afflicted. The prophet Gad came unto the king, expressly commissioned by God to offer him his choice of one out of three judicial inflictions which he named:—three years of famine, three months of defeat and flight before the enemies of his country, or three days of deadly pestilence to smite his population. Confronted with immediate and very terrible punish-

ment, we do not wonder at his saying in reply, " I am in a great strait ; " but he made his election, preferring to fall immediately into the hand of God. So the Lord sent a pestilence, which passed over the whole country ; so that in the three days seventy thousand men were cut off, falling victims to the plague.

The information given by the sacred writer respecting the termination of this pestilence is very difficult to harmonize into a clear, consecutive account ; yet the subject is deeply interesting, not only on account of its important bearing on this portion of the history of David, but also because it led to the Divine appointment of a new locality for the altar of sacrifice, and the public worship of the Hebrew nation. For these and other reasons, we should rejoice not only to state the leading facts in their proper connexion, but also to fill in all the details with perspicuity and accuracy. This, we fear, can only be done approximately ; and the following appears to be as correct an account as can be gathered from the sacred narrative.

The plague had passed over the whole land, and David's soul was wrung with anguish at the intelligence which he received of the wide-spread destruction of his people, when he and the elders of Israel, clothed in sackcloth, looking abroad over the country, hearing the wail of the terror-stricken population, saw the angel of the Lord, with a drawn sword in his hand, hovering over the small mount immediately at the east of the city, and stretching out his hand over Jerusalem, as if to destroy it. Then the king and the elders fell on their faces to the earth, and David said unto God, " Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered ? Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed ; but as for these sheep, what have they done ? Let Thine hand, I pray Thee, O Lord my God,

be on me, and on my father's house; but not on Thy people, that they should be plagued. And the Lord said to the angel, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel stood by the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

The appearance of the destroying angel was not confined to them; Araunah and his sons also saw him, and hid themselves, (1 Chron. xxi. 20,) and probably many others also; for the appearance was not merely momentary, but lasted some time. David does not appear to have known that God, in answer to his prayer, had commanded the angel to cease destroying the people; but while he was waiting in painful suspense, the prophet Gad came to him with a message from God, saying, "Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite." The terrified king obeyed; and, with a company of attendants, reached the place over which the progress of the angel had been arrested. When Araunah and his sons observed the approach of the king, they came forth from the hiding-place to which they had retired on the sight of the angel, and, receiving the king with the most profound respect, inquired the object of his visit. He told them that he had come to purchase the threshing-floor, to erect an altar unto the Lord, that the plague might be stayed from the people.

Araunah, with the utmost readiness, offered to present the land to the king, with the oxen for sacrifice, and the implements for the fire to consume the offering. This offer was so spontaneous and hearty, that the sacred writer observes, "All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king." But David peremptorily refused this generous offer, and bought the ground and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. An altar was then reared unto the Lord, and David offered

burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord; and He answered him from heaven by fire, upon the altar of burnt offering. "So the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed." \* This was one of the very few occasions on which the Lord was pleased, in this miraculous manner, to signify His acceptance of the offerer and the offering, by sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. This signal display of the Divine acceptance not only made a deep impression on the mind of the king, but appears to have been connected with some further declaration of the Divine will, respecting the selection of this place as the appointed spot for sacrificial worship in future.

In proof of this, we have some remarkable statements. It is said: "At that time when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. For the tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the Lord." (1 Chron. xxi. 28-30.) From these words the strange conclusion has been deduced, that David and the elders were on their way to the tabernacle at Gibeon, to sacrifice and pray for the removal of the plague, when, as they stood near the threshing-floor of Araunah, they saw the angel of the Lord, and did not dare to proceed farther. It would be a sufficient answer to this theory to say, that the threshing-floor of Araunah was on a narrow steep hill, to the east of the city, while Gibeon

\* This seems to prove that the command of God to the angel, to stay his hand, did not really remove, but suspend the plague; it was only effectually taken away in answer to the prayer and sacrifice of the king.



lay nearly north-west of it. No one, therefore, going to Gibeon, would think of crossing the deep valley, and climbing the hill, as it then was, when this would take him considerably out of the way.

But almost all the facts are opposed to this notion. David was certainly not on the Mount when he saw the angel, nor for some time afterward, nor, indeed until he went there prepared to sacrifice. For "the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David, Go up, and set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David went up at the saying of Gad." (1 Chron. xxi. 18, 19.) What, then, is the import of this passage? It clearly refers to a passage posterior to the offering of David's sacrifice, and the proof of its acceptance by fire from heaven. For it was "when David saw that the Lord had answered him,"....."then he sacrificed there." These latter words, therefore, cannot refer to his first sacrifice, but to his making this spot, and the altar that had been so signally distinguished, the place at which he stately sacrificed from that time forward. When, therefore, we read that David could not go to the altar of burnt-offering in the high place at Gibeon, "for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the Lord," the words must not be referred to the presentation of his first sacrifice, which was consumed by fire from heaven; for the whole text refers to what was consequent on the acceptance of the sacrifice. We seem, therefore, compelled to the conclusion that some revelation was now made to David, by which the high place at Gibeon was superseded as the place for sacrificial worship; and that this place was appointed to be the place of sacrifice in future, and the site of the temple which was to be erected by David's son. It must, therefore, have been the authority which was

divinely thrown around this revelation that made David afraid in future to go to Gibeon to sacrifice or inquire of God. It is remarkable that we hear nothing of the departure of the angel: whether his presence remained during the offering of the sacrifice, or while the king's purpose was formed to make there his place his established altar of sacrifice, and enjoined its continuance, or departed earlier, cannot now be clearly ascertained. But it seems evident, from the whole account, that at this time the king was informed that on this spot the temple was to be erected.

When David went first up the hill to sacrifice, he bought just the threshing-floor of Araunah; and, for this, and the oxen for sacrifice, he paid fifty shekels of silver: but afterward he purchased a much larger portion of ground, probably the whole summit of the mount, for which he gave six hundred shekels of gold. Further confirmation to this interpretation of the Scripture account is given by the verse which immediately follows the passage quoted above. After it was stated that David was afraid to go to inquire of God at Gibeon "because of the sword of the angel of the Lord," it is added, "Then David said, This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel." (1 Chron. xxii. 1.)

These words, taken in connexion with the facts stated above, leave no reasonable doubt that David, however he might have obtained the information, was at this time fully assured that the summit of the mount was from henceforth to be the divinely appointed place for the national worship according to the Mosaic ritual. It was to be the house of God, even without building. After the example of Jacob at Bethel, David realized the Divine presence; and, with mingled joy and dread, regarded the locality as the dwelling

place of Jehovah. And this altar on which the fire from heaven had fallen, was to remain, not merely as a sacred place for royal sacrifices, but as the divinely appointed and universally recognised seat of the national worship, "the altar of burnt-offering for Israel."

It is impossible to close this chapter of Hebrew history without remarking on its strange and marvellous revelations. It is not necessary to say more here respecting the origin or nature of David's sin in numbering the people; but that an aged monarch who had passed through such a course of discipline as had David, who had felt severe chastisements, and had rejoiced in unnumbered mercies,—that such a man in his old age should fall into sin, is strange and humiliating. The punishment of this sin is such as only God could inflict: the loss of seventy thousand men from the subjects of a sovereign whose heart was glorying in their great number, must have been no ordinary infliction. But it is clear from the narrative that David felt this chastisement as the most severe that could be given. "These sheep, what have they done? Let Thy hand, I pray Thee, be against me, and against my father's house." This was his language; and it is the language of a spirit groaning under an insupportable burden. But the greatest marvel of the whole case is the fact, that this severe judgment was crowned with abounding mercy. The sacrifice, offered in obedience to the Divine command, was consumed by fire from heaven. This was the most signal proof of the Divine acceptance that could have been given; and, as we have seen, was accompanied by the appointment of a new site for the national worship, and the temple which David wished to erect, but which was reserved for his son and suc-

cessor to build. So that thus all the glories of its structure and its worship were, by this means, linked to the crime, punishment, and pardon of the king.

All these scenes of anguish, joy, and thrilling interest, could not pass over the mind of the king without calling forth his grateful strains in sacred song. Two Psalms were called forth on this occasion.

## PSALM XXX.

“ I will extol Thee, O Lord ;  
 For Thou hast lifted me up,  
 And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.  
 O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee,  
 And Thou hast healed me.  
 O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from the  
 grave :  
 Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down  
 to the pit.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His,  
 And give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.  
 For His anger endureth but a moment ;  
 In His favour is life :  
 Weeping may endure for a night,  
 But joy cometh in the morning.

And in my prosperity I said,  
 I shall never be moved.  
 Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain  
 to stand strong :  
 Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.  
 I cried to Thee, O Lord ;  
 And unto the Lord I made supplication.

What profit is there in my blood, when I go down  
to the pit?

Shall the dust praise Thee? shall it declare Thy  
truth?

Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me:

Lord, be Thou my helper.

Thou hast turned for me my mourning into  
dancing:

Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with  
gladness:

To the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee,  
and not be silent.

O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee for  
ever."

## PSALM CXXXI.

"Lord, my heart is not haughty,  
Nor mine eyes lofty:  
Neither do I exercise myself in great matters,  
Or in things too high for me.  
Surely I have behaved and quieted myself,  
As a child that is weaned of his mother:  
My soul is even as a weaned child.  
Let Israel hope in the Lord  
From henceforth and for ever."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### • THE CLOSING PERIOD OF DAVID'S REIGN.

DAVID was now gradually sinking under the weight of years ; but his mind remained active and energetic and intent on improving, in every way, the internal economy of his kingdom.

He had directed his attention in succession to the important elements of the national power. The army was carefully organized under leaders of approval and experience. All the several portions of the royal property were committed to overseers or superintendents, who accounted regularly to the king and treasurers. A large and elaborate arrangement was made for the service of the temple when it should be built, in which the several departments of the duties to be performed were assigned to the priests and Levites in due course, including a complete choir service : and thus the plan, which continued in operation for several centuries, was pre-arranged.

In addition to all these various and important public affairs, the king was most deeply interested in the preparation of means and materials for the erection of the contemplated temple. This was proceeded with on a very large scale and with unbounded liberality. But while the king was absorbed in these measures he appears to have almost overlooked one most essential matter, namely, the person who was divinely appointed to carry this great work into actual accomplishment.

Solomon, the youngest son of David, at this time about twenty years of age, had been, by the express decree of Jehovah, appointed to succeed his father on the throne, and to build this temple for the worship and honour of God. It had been divinely revealed to David, before the birth of his youngest son, that he should be called Solomon, and that he should build a house for the name of Jehovah. (1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10.) When the child was born, Nathan, with evident reference to the father's name, "the loved one, the darling," called the child Jedidiah, "the darling of Jehovah:" but the former name prevailed, and is uniformly employed throughout the Scriptures. Influenced undoubtedly by this prophetic appointment,\* David had sworn by the Lord to Bathsheba that Solomon should succeed him in the throne, and reign after him. (1 Kings i. 17.)

There can scarcely be a doubt but that this purpose of David, confirmed as it was by his oath to Bathsheba, was known to the other members of the family. Or if not certainly known, there would be indications in the conduct of the king toward his youngest son, and also in the bearing of Bathsheba, which would leave little doubt of the king's intentions. As there were several other sons of the king older than Solomon, this preference of a young man of twenty must have been anything but agreeable to them. With the exception of Chileab (or Daniel) the son of Abigail, of whom scarcely anything is known, Adonijah was, after the death of Absalom, the eldest of the king's sons. He is said to have greatly resembled Absalom in

\* The ordinary reading of the text on which the statement is founded has been greatly disputed; and it is remarkable that David never referred to the Divine appointment, but to his own promise, when he commanded Solomon to be anointed king.

the beauty of his person and in the character of his mind. While the king in his old age was busied with his preparations for the temple, Adonijah, perceiving that his father's mind was by this means called away from a minute attention to public affairs, began, in the manner of Absalom, to assume state and pomp of appearance: he, too, provided himself with chariots and horsemen, and had fifty men to run before him. He then succeeded in gathering some of the most influential friends of his father around him,—Abiathar, the high priest, Joab, the captain-general of the army, and many others. Yet David took no cognizance of the doings, until aroused by the most startling intelligence.

Adonijah and his friends, having thus far prepared for the prosecution of their designs without interruption, proceeded to overt acts of an unmistakable character, and he determined at once to assume the sovereignty. In order to this, he invited all his friends and retainers to a great banquet, at En-rogel, near Jerusalem, when he seems to have intended to have himself proclaimed king; and we are told that during the banquet some of the guests proceeded so far as to “drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah (1 Kings i. 25.)

Nathan the prophet, having made himself fully acquainted with all these proceedings, and being aware of the imminent danger to which Solomon, his mother and all their friends were thus exposed, immediately repaired to the palace, told Bathsheba what was being done, and urged her to make an immediate communication of the fact to the king. She accordingly went into the royal apartment, and presented herself as suppliant to David. When he asked what she desired she then replied that he had sworn unto her by th



Lord that Solomon his son should reign after him and sit upon his throne ; but that, instead of this, Adonijah had actually assumed the sovereignty, without the knowledge of the king, and had made a great feast, to which he had invited Joab, Abiathar, and all the king's sons except Solomon. Bathsheba added, that now the eyes of all Israel were on the king, waiting for him to say who should succeed him in the kingdom. As had been concerted between them, while she was yet speaking to the king, Nathan the prophet was announced ; and he, on being admitted to the royal presence, repeated rather more in detail the account which Bathsheba had given. On hearing this, the king commanded his attendants to call Bathsheba, who had retired on Nathan's entrance ; and on her return addressed her thus : " As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, even as I swear unto thee by the Lord God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead ; even so will I certainly do this day." (1 Kings i. 29, 30.) Bathsheba then suitably acknowledged the kind and prompt assurance of the king.

In order to carry his declared purpose into effect, David immediately summoned to his presence Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and commanded them to collect an array of his servants, and to cause Solomon to ride on the king's own mule, and to take him down to Gihon, where Zadok and Nathan were charged to anoint him king over Israel. This ceremony having been performed, the king commanded that the trumpet should be sounded, and his accession to the throne be proclaimed by shouting, " God save king Solomon." On receiving these expressions of the royal will, and com-

mands to carry it into immediate effect, Benaiah, answering for himself and the others, said, "Amen ;" and, in the most fervent manner, expressed a hope that the Lord would confirm this appointment, and that the blessing of the Lord would so abundantly rest upon Solomon's administration that his throne might be even greater than that of his father.

The command of the king was immediately obeyed. Benaiah collected the household troops, the Pelethites and Cherethites, of which he was the commander, and conducted Solomon, riding on the king's mule, to Gihon. The appearance of Solomon thus mounted and attended was understood by the people, and heartily approved by the popular will. The *cortège* was accordingly followed by great numbers of people to the place appointed for the ceremony. Arrived at Gihon, Zadok and Nathan were prepared with a horn of sacred oil, taken from the tabernacle at Gibeon, and anointed Solomon king over Israel. This ceremony having been performed, they cried, "God save king Solomon;" a cry which was at once taken up by the people, who shouted the salutation with such vehemence that it soon reached the city; and, as the *cortège* returned, the multitude had so increased, and expressed their jubilant feelings so loudly, that the sacred writer says, "All the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them." (1 Kings i. 40.)

Just as Adonijah and his party had finished their banquet, the sounds of this tumultuous joy reached the company at En-rogel. Joab, with the ear of an experienced old soldier, caught the ominous sounds of the shouting and the trumpets; and, in evident alarm, inquired the meaning of the noise and uproar in the

city. Just then, Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, arrived, when Adonijah welcomed him as a brave man, and the bearer of good tidings. But Jonathan soon informed them that he had to communicate very unwelcome intelligence. He told Adonijah and his friends that Solomon had been anointed by the king's command at Gihon, and had been received as the sovereign by the universal acclamations of the people; that David had blessed God that he had been permitted to see his son sitting on his throne: for Jonathan assured the conspirators that Solomon was then actually sitting on the throne of the kingdom. On hearing these tidings, the guests who had been feasting with Adonijah were terror-stricken, and fled; so that the aspiring prince, being left alone, terrified at the position in which he had placed himself, fled to Gibeon, and took hold of the horns of the altar; and from thence sent a messenger to Solomon, requesting that his life might be spared. This was granted, and, on his appearing before Solomon, and making his submission, he was directed to go to his house.

The accomplishment of this important measure,—the removal of every rival from competition with Solomon, and the investing him by the king's command with royal dignity and authority,—did much toward meeting the final wishes of David. But the objects upon which he had set his heart were so grand in their character, and so essential to the future well-being of the nation, that the aged monarch wished to proceed still farther in insuring the erection of the temple, and the establishment of Solomon in the sovereignty. For the accomplishment of these objects, David appointed two assemblies of the princes, captains, and principal dignitaries of the kingdom.

The first of these was a congregation of "all the

princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites (1 Chron. xxiii. 2.) These, we are told, David gathered together, and to them he spoke of the provision he already made for the erection of the house of God that he had collected iron and brass in great abundance, and that great numbers of cedar trees were brought by the Zidonians from Tyre for this purpose. The king then charged the assembly to give a zealous support to the efforts of their new sovereign in the building of this noble sanctuary, reminding them that he was "young and tender," and that the temple was to be one of exceeding magnificence, whose glory was to be celebrated in all countries. David then addressed the congregation that, in addition to what he had done, he intended to spend the remnant of his days in making further preparations for the building.

The king then, in the presence of the assembled princes, priests, and Levites, charged Solomon to build this house for the Lord God of Israel,—assuring him that it was in his heart to perform this great work, but that God had forbidden him; but had at the same time, by special command, reserved it for the son who should succeed him on the throne; and that therefore if Solomon devoted himself to this great work, it would secure the Divine protection and blessing. Adding, "Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed." David then proceeded to tell his son that, in addition to the materials previously mentioned, he had prepared for the house of the Lord a hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver, also timber and stone; skilled artisans, and workmen of all kinds.

“Therefore,” said the zealous king, “arise and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.”

David then addressed himself to the assembled princes, priests, and Levites, commanding them to help Solomon, saying, “Is not the Lord your God with you? and hath He not given you rest on every side? for He hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand, and the land is subdued before the Lord and before His people. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God: arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord.” (1 Chron. xxii. 18, 19.) Having thus far realized the desire of his heart, in seeing his son upon his throne, and preparations upon a large scale made for the erection of the temple, David appears to have reviewed his past and present position, until his whole soul was imbued with grateful love to God, and his mind was drawn out in thanksgiving for all the mercies with which he had been favoured. Under this blessed influence, he composed a Psalm which has been emphatically called David’s Song of Praise.

## PSALM CXLV.

“I will extol Thee, my God, O King;  
And I will bless Thy name for ever and ever.  
Every day will I bless Thee;  
And I will praise Thy name for ever and ever.  
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;  
And His greatness is unsearchable.  
One generation shall praise Thy works to another,  
And shall declare Thy mighty acts.  
I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty,

And of Thy wondrous works.  
 And men shall speak of the might of Thy terri-  
 acts :  
 And I will declare Thy greatness.  
 They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy  
 great goodness,  
 And shall sing of Thy righteousness.

The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion ;  
 Slow to anger, and of great mercy.  
 The Lord is good to all :  
 And His tender mercies are over all His works.  
 All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord ;  
 And Thy saints shall bless Thee.  
 They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom,  
 And talk of Thy power ;  
 To make known to the sons of men His mighty  
 And the glorious majesty of His kingdom.  
 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
 And Thy dominion endureth throughout all g-  
 rations.

The Lord upholdeth all that fall,  
 And raiseth up all those that are bowed down.  
 The eyes of all wait upon Thee ;  
 And Thou givest them their meat in due season.  
 Thou openest Thy hand,  
 And satisfiest the desire of every living thing.  
 The Lord is righteous in all His ways,  
 And holy in all His works.  
 The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him  
 To all that call upon Him in truth.  
 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him :  
 He also will hear their cry, and will save them.  
 The Lord preserveth all them that love Him :

But all the wicked will He destroy.  
My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord :  
And let all flesh bless His holy name for ever and  
ever."

As his strength declined, and he was evidently drawing towards the close of his career, David felt impressed with the importance of further action toward establishing Solomon in the kingdom, confirming his heart in the faith and service of God, and still further preparing the *élite* of the nation to afford him zealous support in the building of the house of God. For this purpose he convened another meeting, composed of all the great estates of the kingdom. Perhaps this was the most important and imposing gathering which ever took place in the Hebrew nation. For "David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered unto the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and the captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possessions of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem." Even supposing, as may be expected, that all "the captains over the thousands, and the captains over the hundreds," were not present, this would be a very numerous assembly, probably thousands of persons, and these the most influential and energetic from all the classes of Hebrew society. The meeting, therefore, formed an extensive and just representation of the whole people; and was calculated to diffuse any influence it might receive throughout the whole nation with the greatest energy and effect.

Before this assembly, the aged and venerable king, bending beneath the weight of years, stood up "and

said, Hear me, my brethren and my people : as for I had in mine heart to build a house of rest for ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building : God said unto me, Thou shalt not build a house My name, because thou hast been a man of war, hast shed blood. Howbeit, the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father, to be king over Israel for ever : for He hath chosen Judah to be the ruler ; and of the house of Judah, the house of David my father ; and among the sons of my father He liked to make me king over all Israel : and of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons,) He hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of kingdom of the Lord over Israel. And He said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build My house and My courts : for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father. Moreover, I will establish thy kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do My commandments and My judgments, as at this day. Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep ye commandments, and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God, that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for inheritance for your children after you for ever."

This address was very wisely adapted to promote the objects the king had so much at heart ; namely, consolidation of all the people as a compact nation under Solomon, that they might, with united energy, devote themselves to the erection of the temple. The points of the address are directed to this end. David secured the favourable attention of the people by the manner of his address. Although an aged and venerable, and powerful king, he assumes no distinction, but speaks to them as " My brethren," and



“My people;” expressing his intense desire to build the temple, and telling of his having been forbidden by God to carry this purpose into effect. David then incidentally reminds his hearers that God had chosen the tribe of Judah to be ruler, and of that tribe the house of his father, and of that house himself to be king over Israel; and that, of all his sons, Solomon was by God’s appointment made his successor to the throne; and, as such, charged with the important duty of building a house for the name of God; so that by the choice of the Lord Himself Solomon was thus divinely appointed to the throne, and to accomplish the great work of erecting a temple to the honour of Jehovah.

At the beginning of a new reign, and when the sovereign was a very young man, this recital of God’s appointments was most important. Coming from the lips of David under such solemn circumstances, the words would fall on the ears of his audience as a revelation from heaven; and would do much not only toward uniting the people in submission to the Divine will, and to the sway of Solomon, but would inaugurate that prince into his new dignity with a *prestige* and power that no earthly influence could impart. The king then earnestly exhorted the great assembly to a diligent and faithful observance of the laws of the Lord, that their prosperity might be continued, and their possession of the good land which the Lord had given them be made perpetual.

Having thus delivered the burden of his mind to the assembly, David turned to his son, and gave him a solemn charge; which, for piety, earnestness, and power, has never been surpassed. “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and under-

standeth all the imaginations of the thoughts : if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now ; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary : be strong, and do it." (1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 10.) Who can read this, without asking whether the declaration respecting the consequence of disobedience was prophetic ? This is a question we do not wish to answer, but the case is one of most fearful solemnity.

After the delivery of this charge, David proceeded to lay before Solomon plans of the intended structure, which he had received by direct revelation from God ; (1 Chron. xxviii. 19 ; ) so that Solomon was fully instructed as to the form, size, and manner, not only of the principal building, but also of the numerous accessories thereto, such as chambers for the priests, and treasuries for the gold and precious things which might be deposited in this sacred sanctuary. All these directions were given, with some further information as to the furniture and vessels that would be required in the temple ; after which David added a further earnest exhortation to Solomon, to a zealous devotedness to this work, assuring him that the blessing of heaven would aid him : " For," said the pious old king, " the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee ; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord."

Afterward David produced the precious metals which he had provided for the house and for its sacred furniture,—three thousand talents of pure gold, and seven thousand talents of pure silver ; a gift far exceeding twenty millions sterling ; \* and this was exclusive

\* According to the estimate of Dean Prideaux, the three thousand talents of gold were worth twenty-one million six hundred thousand pounds sterling.

of precious stones, brass, and other costly articles. Placing this magnificent gift before his assembled nobles, he appealed to them for their co-operation, saying, "Who, then, is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"

This appeal was responded to by the princes, captains, and chiefs of the people, in a manner which proved that they were worthy of such a king. Their aggregate contributions amounted to five thousand talents of gold, and ten thousand drams, and ten thousand talents of silver, besides vast quantities of brass, iron, and precious stones. A most noble contribution; and, when regarded as consisting of free-will offerings devoted to a strictly religious object, perhaps one without a parallel in the history of the world.

The spirit and manner in which all this was done, the truthful and hallowed sentiments uttered by the king, and responded to by his people, and the cordial and devout unanimity which characterized the entire assembly, considered in connexion with their bountiful contributions, render it one of the most interesting and important events on the records of history. "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy."

The concluding part of this great meeting was, however, its culminating point; and, in real grandeur, transcended all that preceded it. For, after all the contributions had been presented, and while the people were rejoicing at the unanimity and success of the whole proceedings, the mind of the king was imbued with devout feelings worthy of the occasion; and he rose to bless his people. We have scarcely a more glorious utterance on the pages of revelation than this bene-

diction. "David said, Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. For riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious Name. But who are we, and what is my people, that we should be able to do so willingly after this sort? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all that we store that we have prepared to build Thee a house for Thy holy Name cometh of Thine hand, and is Thine own. I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with Thine eyes, Thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto Thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee. And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace for the which I have made provision." (1 Chron. xi 10-19.)

Having thus given expression to his devout joy and heart's thanksgiving, David called on all the people

bless the Lord ; which they did, bowing their heads, and worshipping. After this there was a great sacrifice, which continued two days, and was a season of high festival and universal gladness. At the close of this sacrificial feast, the people solemnly anointed Solomon king a second time, and set him on the throne of the kingdom "instead of David his father." From the time that Solomon was anointed at Gihon, he sat on the throne as a partner with his father: from this time, however, he reigned as the sole king, David never afterward assuming royal authority. In this new capacity, as having fully succeeded to the sovereign authority, Solomon was anointed the second time ; and in this character all the other sons of David made their submission, and tendered their allegiance to the new king. All the princes, the mighty men, and the chief captains followed their example ; so that Solomon assumed the reins of government with the approbation of the whole Hebrew nation, and was received with universal acclamation.

David took the leading part in this solemn assembly up to the time when all present united in offering thanksgiving and blessing to the Most High ; but after that moment he is not mentioned. He does not appear to have been present at the sacrifice, the sacrificial feast, or the further inauguration of Solomon. Where was he ? For what purpose did he retire from a scene fraught with such intense interest ? We have no doubt that these questions can be easily and satisfactorily answered.

The composition of the seventy-second Psalm is almost universally ascribed to this occasion. The most approved authorities, and abundant internal evidence, support this opinion ; and, notwithstanding the title of the Psalm, we fully concur in this judg-

ment. Considering the age of David, the assembly of which we have just spoken must have severely taxed his bodily and mental powers. It was not only a time of intense excitement, but also one that called forth strong religious emotion ; and in such a mind as his, placed in such circumstances as he was, it would certainly excite the most hallowed feeling, and elicit very earnest aspirations to heaven. All this leads to the conclusion that, when the great assembly was virtually closed by the universal ascription of blessing to God, the king retired to his private apartment, or to the tabernacle, and, casting himself before the Lord, poured out the fulness of his soul in the following language :—

## PSALM LXXII.

“ Give the king Thy judgments, O God,  
 And Thy righteousness unto the king’s son.  
 He shall judge Thy people with righteousness,  
 And Thy poor with judgment.  
 The mountains shall bring peace to the people,  
 And the little hills, by righteousness.  
 He shall judge the poor of the people,  
 He shall save the children of the needy,  
 And shall break in pieces the oppressor.  
 They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon  
 endure,  
 Throughout all generations.  
 He shall come down like rain upon the mown  
 grass :  
 As showers that water the earth.  
 In his days shall the righteous flourish ;  
 And abundance of peace so long as the moon  
 endureth.  
 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,

And from the river unto the ends of the earth.  
 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before  
     him ;  
 And his enemies shall lick the dust.  
 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring  
     presents :  
 The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.  
 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him :  
 All nations shall serve him.  
 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth ;  
 The poor also, and him that hath no helper.  
 He shall spare the poor and needy,  
 And shall save the souls of the needy.  
 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence :  
 And precious shall their blood be in his sight.  
 And he shall live,  
 And to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba :  
 Prayer also shall be made for him continually ;  
 And daily shall he be praised.  
 There shall be a handful of corn in the earth  
 Upon the top of the mountains ;  
 The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon :  
 And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the  
     earth.  
 His name shall endure for ever :  
 His name shall be continued as long as the sun :  
 And men shall be blessed in him :  
 All nations shall call him blessed.  
 Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,  
 Who only doeth wondrous things.  
 And blessed be His glorious name for ever :  
 And let the whole earth be filled with His glory ;  
     Amen, and Amen.  
 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

It is scarcely possible for any one in a devout frame of mind to read this glorious hymn with serious attention without being imbued with something of the inspired author's spirit; and apprehending, in a good degree, the working of his mind throughout the composition of the Psalm. Retired from the excitement of that great assembly into the quietude of his closet, he prays for Solomon as "the king," and also as "the king's son." This last form of expression seems to have recalled to the mind of David all the wonderful prophetic revelations made to him by God through Nathan the prophet. He accordingly proceeds in the following lines to dilate on the character and glory of the kingdom over which this divinely appointed son was destined to reign. When Nathan delivered these prophetic revelations, Solomon was not born; the idea of a temple had only existed as a crude conception in the mind of David, and he appears to have mentioned it only to the prophet.

At the time when this Psalm was composed, Solomon was not only born, but actually seated on the throne of the kingdom; and had already in his possession a vast amount of treasure, devoted to the erection of a noble temple, which he was appointed to build to the honour of Jehovah. As, therefore, the prophecy of Nathan, and the second Psalm, which was founded on it, regarded the kingdom of David, continued through his son and his descendants, as ultimately merging into, and being identical with, the kingdom of Messiah, David considered the inauguration of Solomon, and all the thrilling scenes through which he had just passed, as the glorious establishment of this predicted kingdom; and his rapt spirit exulted in anticipation of its still more glorious development and increase.



In this outpouring of his soul to God, therefore, having uttered a prayer for Solomon, his mind was carried onward, and realized facts and scenes which could have no personal reference to Solomon; but had an exact accomplishment in the kingdom of Christ. A reference to a few lines of the Psalm will make this apparent. It could not have been truly predicted of Solomon that in his days there should be "abundance of peace as long as the sun and moon endure;" that "they shall fear thee" as "long as the moon endureth;" nor that all "kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him." He could not "save the souls of the needy," nor were "all men blessed in him." These prophecies could only be declared of the kingdom which God had promised to set up in the earth through His incarnate Son, and in Him they will all be gloriously verified. And these powers having been predicated of the royal head of this kingdom proves that we have rightly apprehended its nature as begun in David, rendered more glorious under Solomon, and consummated in Christ.

The pious old king, having realized the best hopes of his life,—the grandest aspirations of his heart,—in the events of this happy day, and in the stirring scenes which had passed before him, closed his address to the Almighty with a burst of grateful thanksgiving:—

"Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,  
Who only doeth wondrous things.  
And blessed be His glorious name for ever;  
And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.  
Amen and Amen."

And then, as if to indicate that he had nothing further to desire, happy in the fruition of every expected blessing, with every hoped-for good in his possession, his

full heart exclaimed, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

The venerable sovereign did not long survive these events. His health and strength rapidly declined; but even in his weakness he was intent on giving some further religious counsel to Solomon, and, at the same time, cautioning him as to his behaviour to two or three of his subjects. So, calling the young king to his bedside, he again enjoined on him an entire and continual obedience to the laws of God. And that this counsel might rest on his heart as the solemn advice of a dying father, he began by saying, "I go the way of all the earth." He then charged his son to keep the charge of the Lord, and to obey all the commands laid down by Moses, assuring him that he and his children must do this in order to retain possession of the throne of Israel. He then reminded Solomon of the murders committed by Joab, and charged him not to let his hoar head go down to the grave in peace. The kindness of Barzillai was next brought to the notice of Solomon, and he was urged to a generous consideration of the sons of this noble Gileadite. And, lastly, the cruel and treasonable conduct of Shimei was referred to; and the king was requested not to hold him guiltless, but to bring his hoar head down to the grave with blood.

No exception has been taken to David's grateful remembrance of Barzillai's kindness and loyalty; but he has been severely censured for his reference to Joab and Shimei, and for his advice to Solomon respecting them. A brief consideration of these cases will show that this censure is unjust. In respect of Joab, it should be remembered that he had committed two murders under circumstances which rendered the crimes acts of signal wickedness and atrocity. He had never

obtained pardon, or any promise of pardon, for these acts of violence; his punishment, therefore, had only been delayed, and delayed by a cause which was in itself a serious crime,—David knew that any attempt of his to punish these murders at the time they were committed would be met by Joab with treason and rebellion. Surely in these circumstances there could be nothing wrong in David's calling his son's attention to the character of such a dangerous subject, and advising him to deal with such a man according to his deservings.

The case of Shimei is nearly similar. He had been guilty of a very gross outrage, under most aggravated circumstances; and, if David had listened to the entreaty of Abishai, and allowed him to be put to death in the midst of his sin, no one would have thought him hardly dealt with. But David had given him a solemn promise that he would not take his life; and, although this promise was not obtained simply by the penitent submission of the offender, but was to some extent extorted from the king,—for Shimei met him at the Jordan with a thousand retainers at his back,—David strictly kept his promise, and Shimei was allowed to remain unmolested during the remainder of David's reign. But, when passing away from all his earthly cares and powers, he felt it right to caution Solomon respecting a man of this dangerous character, and to advise him to show such an one no further lenity.

That this was the meaning of David in both these cases can scarcely be doubted. It must be admitted that Solomon had much better means of knowing his father's wishes than we can have, and the narrative shows that he was quite disposed to comply with these wishes. Yet Solomon did not punish Joab or Shimei for any crimes committed by them during the reign of

David. Joab lived on unmolested and in peace, until he was executed on account of his complicity in Adonijah's treason; and Shimei was required to reside in the capital, where his conduct would be open to observation, and where he would be unable, even if so disposed, to promote disaffection among the leading men of his tribe. To this command he cheerfully assented, although he knew that death was the penalty attached to disobedience, replying, "The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do." And, while obedient to the prescribed terms, he was visited with no punishment; and was, after two years, put to death for violating a compact to which he was a consenting party. These facts afford the best and only reliable exposition of the intention and object of David in his last charge to Solomon.

The dangerous characters of Joab and Shimei were evidently apparent to the inspired writer of the sacred record; for, after narrating their execution, he says, "And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon." (1 Kings ii. 46.) So David "died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead." (1 Chron. xxix. 28.)

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL CHARACTER OF DAVID, AND THE RESULTS OF HIS REIGN.

THE termination of such a reign as that of David suggests several serious and important inquiries, and some topics of deep and varied interest. To some of these it will be necessary to direct attention; and it is thought most convenient to do this under the guidance of a remarkable poetic speech, made by the king himself, and entitled, "The last words of David." This remarkable piece was thus called, either because it was the last poetical composition which he wrote, or because it contains a recital of the principal features of his personal and public character, and a summary of the results of his government on the national interests. The following is the poem referred to:—

"Now these be the last words of David.  
David the son of Jesse said,  
And the man who was raised up on high,  
The anointed of the God of Jacob,  
And the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,  
The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,  
And His word was in my tongue.  
The God of Israel said,  
The Rock of Israel spake to Me,  
He that ruleth over men must be just,  
Ruling in the fear of God.

And he shall be as the light of the morning, when  
the sun riseth,  
Even a morning without clouds ;  
As the tender grass springing out of the earth  
By clear shining after rain.  
Although my house be not so with God ;  
Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant,  
Ordered in all things, and sure :  
For this is all my salvation, and all my desire,  
Although He make it not to grow.”

This portion of Scripture is, by the common consent of all biblical scholars, regarded as one of the most difficult in the Bible ; and it has called forth just as many different opinions, as to its scope and meaning, as there have been critics who have examined it. We shall not canvass these various opinions, but simply notice one of them, and then state what we believe to have been the meaning of the royal Psalmist in this beautiful fragment. Several eminent biblical critics have regarded this passage as a prophecy of Messiah ; an opinion which, in our judgment, seems most unlikely, and which is unsupported by any substantial reason. There is certainly no single expression in the whole piece which must, of necessity, refer to the promised Redeemer ; while it undoubtedly, at the beginning, speaks of David himself ; and unless there is some very clear and obvious mention of another person, as addressed or spoken of, it is most reasonable to refer the whole to him who is most unquestionably the subject of the opening paragraph. We feel bound, therefore, to regard this principle as a key to the meaning of the entire passage.

Considering the peculiar and varied character of David's mind and life, and the multiplied changes and

vicissitudes through which he was called to pass, it would be rather strange if he, toward the close of his life, had made no reference to his character and reign, and to their influence on his country. And this becomes still more strange, when it is considered that he wrote very largely, and that a great portion of his writing was respecting himself personally. Yet, unless we have it in this portion of Scripture, there is scarcely anything from his pen, on the subjects mentioned above, in the whole of his productions.

There can be no doubt as to the propriety of regarding the first four lines of the poem under consideration as exhibiting the personal lineage and character of the Hebrew king. And these will be thus far sufficient for our purpose. "David the son of Jesse said : " the aged, venerable king, drawing toward the close of his life, is placed before us uttering his last words. His public life is ended. His sojourn on earth is nearly finished. He gathers up his remaining strength for a final declaration respecting himself and his reign. And, in doing this, he gives his name and paternity : "David, the son of Jesse," of the tribe of Judah, from whom Shiloh was to come. David, in the most solemn and emphatic manner, made a statement : he "said." But what was he? What were the prominent features of his character? The first to which the mind of David himself turned, and which he was forward to recognise, was this : "The man who was raised up on high." As it is no uncommon thing, and never has been in any age of the world, for a man to improve his circumstances, and advance his social position, it is evident that David must have regarded his elevation as most extraordinary, to induce him to give it this prominence, and to speak of it in such emphatic terms. But the circumstances clearly justified the use of these

strong terms. He was raised from a position of obscurity and poverty, to a state of great wealth and distinction; from a sheepfold to a throne; or, as he otherwise spoke of it, from the dust, from the dunghill, to sit among princes. Even this, however, although descriptive of great and rapid elevation, does not meet the case of David. He not only became a king, but a great king. Saul was a king, but after a reign of forty years all his royal power was insufficient to preserve his country from invasion; while David, having emerged from the keeping of the sheep of his father on the hills of Bethlehem, having displayed great heroism in the field, and evinced all the qualities of a great general, found the Hebrew kingdom just in the condition in which it was left by Saul, and not only raised it to independence and power, but actually subjugated every neighbouring state; so that he reigned paramount from the Euphrates over all western Asia. Egypt, with all her ancient *prestige* and power, was cut off from her overland trade with the East, and compelled to witness in silence the transfer of this great source of wealth to the Hebrews. Syria, Edom, Ammon, Philistia, and every other people within this vast range of territory, was made tributary. And David was the centre of power, the directing mind that ruled supreme over it. The world has seen so few instances of a man raised from a position so humble, to one of such dignity, wealth, and power, that it might be truly said, "He was the man who was raised up on high." In the whole world, at that time, there was no similar instance of the elevation of an individual; so that the strong emphatic language of this phrase is amply justified.

The next clause of this remarkable poem is no less significant,—“the anointed of the God of Jacob.” We



do not regard these words as applicable to the ceremony by which he was constituted king over Israel. That seems clearly included in words already considered as a part of the process by which he was raised up on high. We consider these words rather as setting forth the special Divine appointment by which David was brought into peculiar and intimate relation to Jehovah, as a king to rule over and guide His people, and as a sacred prophet to communicate to them Divine truth, and to minister to them a knowledge of their duty and of their covenant relation to God. In this sense the word "anointed" means the Divine and spiritual vocation, and the necessary qualifying influences of the Holy Spirit, of which the material anointing was but the type or symbol. That this view of the text was taken at a very early date is evident from the fact that the Chaldee version renders it, "Anointed by the word of the God of Jacob." \*

This sets forth a vitally important feature in the character of the son of Jesse. It was this that made him what he was. By nature he possessed remarkable physical and intellectual powers; he was a brilliant poet, an eminent musician, a man of varied gifts and lofty genius: but all these would not have made him the David of Holy Scripture,—the man after God's own heart; this was done by a copious baptism of the Holy Ghost, the unction of the Holy One. It is confessed, that this did not always save him from frailty and from sin: but on these unhappy occasions it led him by penitence and prayer to seek for pardon, nor should these two or three departures from rectitude be allowed to shut out from our vision the pious and virtuous labours of a long life. It was the operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind of this prophet king,

\* *Unctus in dicto Dei Japhacob.*

the virtue of the anointing spoken of in the words before us, which gave him that strong faith in God which made him a hero in his youth; this sustained him in all the labours and dangers of his wandering life; it was this that gave him wisdom to govern and prowess to conquer the enemies of his country. By this spiritual power he was imbued with that Divine zeal which gave his people the tabernacle on Zion, and induced him to make such wonderful provision for the erection of the temple. Above all, it was this unction that filled his soul with that more than human power, spirituality, and feeling, which gave the universal church his inimitable Psalms. These stand throughout all ages as a living witness for the truth, and point out their author as the man pre-eminently "anointed by the word of the God of Jacob."

The first paragraph of this poem contains an allusion to yet another feature in David's character, and says that he was "the sweet Psalmist of Israel." Mention has already been made of the beauty, purity, and spirituality of the Psalms, and of their universal adaptation to the edification of the church in all ages. It is therefore intended here to confine our observations strictly to the words of the text, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel." If these Psalms are a great means of instruction, edification, and blessing to the Christian church, what must they have been to the Israel of David's day? How would the pious and devout among a people possessing only the books of Moses as the revealed truth of God, and these unquestionably only in a very limited circulation, rejoice in the possession of these spiritual hymns! If we value them so highly when we have also the sublime poetry of the prophets, the discourses of the Son of God, and the Epistles of His apostles, how would godly Israelites exult in the pos-

session of these inspired Psalms, when they had scarcely any other devotional Scripture! The means by which these soul-stirring truths were brought to their minds constituted also at that time a very peculiar blessing. There can be no doubt that sincerely pious Hebrews, bringing their sacrifices to the door of the tabernacle, and waiting in prayer while they were offered, received blessings from heaven; but how much more richly would this spiritual good be realized when, worshipping in full vision of the ark and cherubim of glory, their minds were led into spiritual devotion by singing the Psalms of David! It is perhaps impossible for us to apprehend the vast advance in the means and results of public worship which were thus introduced. Not the least of the glories of his character is brought into view when David is called "the sweet Psalmist of Israel."

It is worthy of observation that in this brief notice of David's character there is no mention of his martial heroism, nothing said of his statesmanship, no allusion, in fact, to any merely human excellence; every point noticed exhibits the operation of Divine grace on the mind of the man. He is not spoken of as the maker of his own fortune: he was *raised* by the blessing of the Almighty on the exercise of his natural powers. There were in him all the attributes of the great man, but it was the anointing of the God of Jacob which crowned him with success. He possessed naturally a fine feeling, brilliant genius, and a fervid imagination; but it was the abiding influence of the Holy Spirit, directing, guiding, and intensifying all these, that made him "the sweet Psalmist of Israel." Thus is the personal character of David set before us by the pen of inspiration.

The second part of this poem asserts that the per-

son spoken of in the preceding lines had received direct revelations from God for communication to others, and also some for his own instruction and guidance. The first is given in these words :—

“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,  
And His word was in my tongue.”

Here is a clear and distinct assertion that the Spirit of the Lord spake by David, that the mind and purposes of the Almighty were revealed to this favoured servant of God, and that he was thus empowered to declare, to the same extent that he was informed, the will of God. Wise men of the present day either deny the possibility of this inspiration, or reject all such claims with scorn and contempt. Here, however, is an aged king who has passed through the busy scenes of a long life, and is now uttering his last words, standing on the threshold of the grave; and on the brink of eternity he unfalteringly says, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was on my tongue.” Is this statement true? We read his sacred songs, and even at this day feel them pregnant with celestial fire. They bear, even in a translation, plenary evidence that they are imbued with a vitality that nothing but the breath of God could give. Are we mistaken in this judgment? Then was Peter mistaken when he declared before the council at Jerusalem that God spake by the mouth of His servant David; (Acts iv. 25;) and on this supposition even Jesus Christ was mistaken when he declared that David spake by the Holy Ghost. (Mark xii. 36.) But the testimony is true; the Spirit of the Lord spake by David in his inspired poetry. The mind of God, the thoughts of God, the truth of God, are there certainly recorded for the benefit of mankind

in all ages. And this inspiration of Divine truth was as minute as it was real. It was not general views, and partial exhibitions of truth, with which David was charged; he had to speak and write the words of God. He states explicitly that "His word was in my tongue." He was one of those "holy men of God" who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter i. 21.)

This part of the remarkable Scripture under consideration contains further important information. David had been raised by the providence of God from a very humble position to a throne. He was appointed to govern the elect people of God at the most critical period of their history, and, without experience or an adequate training, had to direct their destinies so as to raise them from the condition of a weak, poor, disunited people to be a united, wealthy, and dominant nation. In those circumstances, was he favoured with any special direction or advice calculated to qualify him for his arduous duties? Or was he left to the exercise of his own unaided knowledge and judgment? On the contrary, he declares that he received special and distinct revelations of the Divine will respecting the duty and art of government:—

"The God of Israel said,  
The Rock of Israel spake to me,  
He that ruleth over men must be just,  
Ruling in the fear of God."

This Divine communication was made to the mind of the royal prophet with such force and distinctness that it was impossible for him to mistake the source whence it came. He therefore places the fact upon record in the most emphatic terms, and in the second

of these lines he repeats the statement in more forcible language: "The Rock of Israel," the Divine source of all Israel's power, the unfailing refuge of His people, "spake to me." The following two lines contain the substance of this communication.

Great efforts have been made by eminent commentators to invest these words with a predictive and Messianic character. We have given every attention to their statements and arguments. Bishop Horsley renders the passage, "The just one ruleth over men, he ruleth by the fear of God." Geddes and Booth give this rendering, "The Rock of Israel hath promised a just ruler over mankind, who will rule in the fear of God;" and Dr. A. Clarke, "The just one is the ruler among men, ruling in the fear of God;" and this is substantially the version of Kennicott. All these versions are intended to exhibit the text as a prophecy of Messiah; but, with sincere respect for such an array of learning and talent, we cannot but regard this sense as forced, and inconsistent with the scope of the context.

The inspired writer had previously said that God had spoken by him, and now he as distinctly declares that God speaks to him. But if the sense put upon the words by the divines just quoted is correct, there was no reason for this change, and it becomes embarrassing and misleading. For if these words contain a prophecy referring to the reign of Messiah, then the text is a revelation from God made through David to the church and the world, and God was here also speaking by him, and this clause would therefore be of precisely the same character as the preceding lines.

But, besides this, it seems that the Messianic application of this text is inconsistent with the terms em-

ployed. When we speak of ruling in the fear of God, the words convey the meaning that the fear of God operating on the mind of the ruler leads him to rule in equity and righteousness ; and the language in this sense is very natural and forcible when applied to a human ruler : but is it natural or consistent when applied to the kingly government of Messiah, who is " God over all ? " We think not. Dr. A. Clarke seems to have felt the force of this objection, and hence observes, " It is by God's fear that Jesus Christ rules the heart of all His followers." It has been already shown that this mode of placing the fear of God in the minds of the governed is inconsistent with the terms of the text : nor does this representation appear to be exactly correct ; for we hold that it is not principally by the fear of God in the heart of His followers that Christ rules, but rather by the influence and power of the love of God that the rule of Christ in His kingdom is maintained. " Love is the fulfilling of the law."

But if there are serious objections to regard these words as a prophecy of Christ, what is there to prevent our regarding them as a Divine direction given to David ? He says, " The God of Israel spake to me,— He that ruleth over men must be just." David had been appointed by God to rule over Israel, and here the principles by which he is to govern are laid down. Nothing seems more clear and obvious than this application of the text. The words evidently contain God's directions for the good government of a kingdom.

" He that ruleth over men must be just." He must be just in himself. And when great power is possessed, this duty, although absolutely necessary to good government, is often a very difficult achievement. This Divine law, however, clearly required the king to

act with strict justice between himself and his people. He was therefore forbidden to extract more wealth from them than was necessary for the maintenance of his proper authority, and the preservation of good order, and the administration of justice among the people. By the same rule the king was prohibited from intrenching himself in more power than was necessary for the public good. The operation of impartial justice would teach the sovereign that the people did not exist for him, but that he was placed in authority for their benefit; so that, while it was strictly just for him to hold sufficient power to preserve order and promote the common well-being of his people, and their progressive improvement, it was not consistent for him to wrest from them a further extent of power for his personal or family aggrandisement, or to promote any ambitious projects that might be presented to his mind. This is the Divine law; under no circumstances is there any Divine right to rule unjustly. And this principle should pervade the framing of all laws, and the manner of their administration, as an absolute moral necessity. "He that ruleth over men *must* be just."

The justice of the ruler should not only influence all his actions as between himself and his people, but the operation of this law extends deeper and broader than this. He must be just in his administration to all orders, classes, and interests in the kingdom. One province must not be burdened to ease another. No section of the people must have to bear more than their equitable share of pecuniary or personal service in support of the state. All this indicates injustice in the ruling power. Under the influence of this rule the government is called on to equalize all its demands according to the ability of its subjects. This should



call forth the earnest and anxious concern of the ruler, who, in regard to every part of his dominions and every class of his subjects, should ever remember that he *must* be just.

This rule goes a step beyond this. The ruler must not only be just, he must also rule in the fear of God. This is less regarded in our day than it should be. Men hastily say that governments have nothing to do with religion. It is fully admitted that no evil has afflicted our world more than the action of human governments which have assumed a lordship over the consciences of the people, when articles of faith have been prescribed, and religious formularies have been dictated, and enforced by pains and penalties. This is gross injustice. But the assertion of liberty of conscience, the most perfect freedom of worship, the entire absence of everything approaching to persecution, does not in any degree neutralize the truth announced in the words now before us. When the ruler has granted all these, as every government is in justice bound to do, the ruler is still under an imperative obligation to govern in the fear of God.

The existence, providence, and truth of God are to be recognised; the responsibility of the ruler to God, not only for his own personal character and conduct, but also for the administration of his government, is to be acknowledged. The ruler under the operation of this truth is bound, as far as lies in his power, to frame all his laws in a manner best adapted to promote the physical, social, and moral welfare of his people; and to conduct all the affairs of his government in reference to God, and, as far as possible, in accordance with His will. He is to govern in the fear of God, to keep the presence and power of an almighty Arbiter always in his view, and, in all the affairs of

his kingdom, to allow himself to recognise and be directed by the fear of God.

All this was evidently included in the Divine precept given to David. And although, in two or three instances, he grievously sinned against this law, and, probably, in many others rendered but a limited and partial submission to its requirement,—for we claim for him no superhuman perfection,—yet it is certain that his general conduct as a ruler met with the Divine approval. The sacred record says: “So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people.” (1 Chron. xviii. 14.) So far was this the case, that his uniform reverence for God and His law, in his kingly character, is made by Divine authority the model and standard for the conduct of all his successors. The Lord said to Solomon, “If thou wilt walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.” (1 Kings iii. 14.) “David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.....And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father.” (1 Kings xv. 5, 11.)

The following portion of this poem is thus rendered in our translation:—

“And he shall be as the light of the morning, when  
the sun riseth,  
Even a morning without clouds;  
As the tender grass springing out of the earth  
By clear shining after rain.”

This, and the following verse, is uniformly regarded

as one of the most difficult portions of Holy Scripture ; but we think there can be little or no doubt that it is intended, by the use of two striking and beautiful figures, to set forth a great and lovely renovation or improvement,—the light of the morning when the sun riseth without clouds,—the tender grass springing out of the earth after refreshing showers. Here we have, first, the landscape wrapped in the darkness of night ; but an agency intervenes which sheds light on the scene, and a marvellous transformation takes place ; the range of vision is lit up with grandeur and beauty, and looks as full of brilliance and gladness as a clear, bright day. The figure is changed : here is a prospect as gloomy and barren as a sterile desert,—as unsightly as a land parched with drought ; but, through influences that arise, the drought, barrenness, and sterility disappear, and the scene becomes as full of verdure, as rich in vegetable bloom, as a fruitful meadow abundantly watered by refreshing showers, followed by the clear shining of the sun. Thus far the meaning appears clear and evident.

Another step may now be taken. It seems sufficiently manifest that the agency to which the marvellous change set forth in these figures is attributed is the man who rules justly and in the fear of God, as set forth in the preceding lines, " He shall be as the light," &c. Both Kennicott and Horsley, although they put a different sense on the words from that given above, agree in this, that these figures set forth the results of the just ruler's influence. It is, indeed, difficult to see how any other meaning can be given to the terms. We are thus conducted to an interpretation of the text adopted by Bishop Patrick from an old critic ; namely, that the state of the Hebrew kingdom is here set forth by a comparison with natural things.

This is, we believe, the key to a correct exposition of this difficult Scripture. David, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, after having stated the principles that were revealed to him as the basis of his government, now shows the results which that government had produced on the country. When he took the reins of government, the Hebrew nation is assumed to have been in a state fitly represented by darkness and sterility. Was not this the case? The vigour, energy, and martial prowess of Saul had certainly roused the Hebrew spirit, and given something of soldier-like power to their arms; but his sun went down amid storm and gloom. He left his country defeated, divided, distracted, and convulsed,—harassed by internal discord, threatened with further Philistine invasion. No figure was too strong to set forth the darkened prospects of the nation, and the blighted condition of the people.

When the country was in this state, David was made king over Judah, and, seven years afterward, king over all Israel; and, after a reign of thirty-three years, ruling justly and in the fear of God, we see him an old man on the brink of the grave, reviewing the results of his reign under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: and what is the prospect spread before him? The darkness has passed away. Israel is now united and prosperous; no cloud darkens the political sky; they have obtained unbounded wealth, so that a sum equal to many millions is freely subscribed in a single day for one grand religious object. Instead of any foe threatening to disturb their peace, their sway is paramount in Western Asia. The dying prophet-king therefore exults in the marvellous change that has been wrought; and speaks of the result of his government as having lit up his country like the light of the morning,—a morning without clouds,—and as having produced a renovation

as great as that caused by refreshing showers falling on a land parched with drought, and filling it with verdure and beauty. This we regard as the sense of this portion of the Scripture.

The following verse has also its difficulties; but the application of the whole passage to the personal experience and circumstances of David, supplies a principle of interpretation which will serve to explain this part of the poem, as it has the preceding:—

“Although my house be not so with God;  
 Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant,  
 Ordered in all things, and sure:  
 For this is all my salvation, and all my desire,  
 Although He make it not to grow.”

David was well aware of the nature of the everlasting covenant which God had made with him. He knew that the grand feature of this covenant—its ruling element, that, indeed, which made every part important and illustrious—was the fact that the kingdom of David was the beginning, the initial and introductory portion, of that kingdom which was to culminate and become universal and perpetual under God's Messiah. David was well aware of another fact,—that although it was the Divine will that his descendants should sit and rule on the throne of Israel until this kingdom of God was set up on the earth, their continuing to do so was made to depend on their fidelity to God, and their observance of His laws. David accordingly enjoined upon Solomon, “to keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways,” for this reason: “That the Lord may continue His word which He spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their ways, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and

with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said He) a man on the throne of Israel." (1 Kings ii. 4.) So in his public charge to Solomon, the aged king said: "If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever." (1 Chron. xxviii. 9.)

Here, then, were two apparently conflicting issues: an everlasting covenant that the throne and kingdom of David should be maintained, until absorbed in the kingdom of Messiah, and thus become universal and everlasting; while, at the same time, the tenure of David's descendants on the throne was contingent on their obedience and fidelity to God. How did these possibly opposing results affect the mind of the royal prophet? Did they shake his faith, and disturb his confidence in the Divine word? Or was he distracted by the difficulty of deciding whether to hope for the continued temporal prosperity of his descendants, or the certain success and glory of the kingdom of Christ? Neither of these thoughts gave him uneasiness. Calm in the exercise of an intelligent and strong faith in the covenant mercies of Jehovah, his mind could contemplate every possible contingency, and rejoice in anticipating a perfect accomplishment of the Divine will. The passage before us speaks his sentiments on this subject.

He had just mentioned the justice and purity of his reign, and its happy effect on the nation; and his mind being led to consider the case of his descendants, he proceeds to say, "Although my house be not so with God;" that is, "If my children shall not walk as I have walked, and rule like me, justly, and in the fear of God, and so, in consequence of their transgressions, they are not made to flourish and increase, but are diminished, and ultimately destroyed,"—what then?

Does the prospect of such a calamity destroy David's confidence, and cut off his hope? Not in the least. He looks higher than mere family relationship, and earthly power and glory. His soul realizes the spiritual plan and purpose of God in human redemption, and his faith apprehends the glorious dominion of that future son of his, who was also to be the Son of God; and instead of being distracted or distressed, he says in terms of exultation:—

“ Although my house be not so with God ;  
Although He make it not to grow ;  
Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant,  
Ordered in all things, and sure :  
For this is all my salvation, and all my desire.”

He saw that whatever contingency might threaten his family, whatever calamity crush his successors, and thus affect the permanency of his temporal throne, the grand redeeming purpose of God, the establishment of his son on the throne of a spiritual Zion, was certain, “ ordered in all things, and sure : ” and “ this,” he says, “ is all my salvation, and all my desire.” To this he looked with a steady confidence, and an unwavering faith, as the means of his own salvation, and the redemption of the world : it was in this, therefore, that all his desires met and culminated.

Whatever may be thought of this exposition of the difficult scripture under consideration, it is certain that what we have supposed the royal Psalmist to have apprehended, actually came to pass. The successors of David on his throne did prove disobedient and unfaithful ; they fell to a fearful extent into apostasy and idolatry. Yet for a long time the Lord spared them, and upheld them on the throne, for His word's

sake, and for His servant David's sake. But they persisted in their course of iniquity so generally, and to such an extent, that they were at length cut off, and all the tribes of Israel carried into captivity. But although the descendants of David were thus removed from the throne, the covenant mercies of God stood sure. In the fulness of time, the promised Saviour and Son was announced; and in strict accordance with all we have stated, it was declared of Him, that "the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke i. 32, 33.)

This prediction has been fulfilled. This prophetic announcement was gloriously verified in our Lord Jesus Christ. Having passed through His course of ministry, passion, death, and resurrection, as man's incarnate Saviour, He ascended on high, and is seated on His mediatorial throne,—the Son of David, and the Son of God. His reign over the true spiritual Israel has been established in the earth, and Jesus is enthroned King in Zion. Millions of the human race have subjected themselves to His sway, and have been taken to the presence of the great King. Millions more now bow to His will, revere His gracious sway, and exult in the privilege of being subjects in the kingdom of God. And thus Christ, ruling in the Christian church, subduing the world to His dominion, verifies the covenant mercies of David, and affords an undying pledge that this glorious kingdom shall go on increasing, and ultimately become universal and everlasting.

This we regard as a correct exposition of the beautiful poem entitled, "The last words of David." It sets forth his character, exhibits the nature of the revelations made to him by God, points out the happy results



of his reign to the nation, and gives a remarkable proof of the great extent to which he apprehended the scheme of human redemption, and the strength of his faith in the covenant mercies of Jehovah. The concluding lines of the poem, which speak of the wicked, the danger of contact with them, and of their doom, do not come within the range of our subject.

We cannot finish this sketch of the life and reign of David without a few brief concluding observations.

In offering these, we must first notice his personal character. The principal events of his life have been passed in review before us; and the impression has from the first acquired increasing strength, as we have considered the man from his youth to the days of his old age, that the history of the world has shown but few men, if any, so truly great and eminent.

His indomitable bravery, his daring courage, and his military genius, first demand attention. It is not necessary here to cite examples. From the days of his youth when he slew Goliath, to the personal conflict in which he narrowly escaped with his life, he was a brave, heroic soldier. With some religious persons, the continued exercise of this attribute may, perhaps, be considered rather a defect than a virtue; but such persons should consider two things. David's valour had for its ruling element mighty faith in God. He was certainly naturally courageous and valiant; but take his conflict with Goliath as the true exponent of this feature of his character. When the proud Philistine ridiculed his appearance, and spoke to him with ineffable contempt, what was his reply? He did not vaunt the power of his sling, or the strength of his arm, but said, "I come to thee in the name of the God of Israel." This was not an exceptional case, but the principle which always influenced the valour of David.

It should further be considered that the wars of David were undertaken for the express purpose of carrying into effect the promises of God respecting His people, namely, to place them in full and undisturbed possession of the country which He had given them; and then to extend their dominion over all the countries included in the Divine promise to Abraham. The wars of David, therefore, were not mere struggles for national ascendancy or aggrandisement, but measures necessary to the accomplishment of the declared will of the Almighty respecting Israel. The only correct view to take of these numerous martial operations is to regard them as supplementary to the wars of Joshua. The son of Jesse only completed what the son of Nun had but begun; and both acted under the sanction and immediate auspices of Jehovah.

He was also a statesman of no ordinary calibre. Consider the state of the kingdom when he began to reign, in comparison with the condition in which he left it. Take into account the powers of mind necessary to organize his band, and to use them during his wanderings so as to elude all the energy of Saul. Let a fair estimate be formed of the administrative ability that was necessary to keep all the countries that he had subdued in harmonious subjection to his power,—the vast empire which included Philistia, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Syria, and all the other tribes between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. And let it be remembered that David had not simply to govern this empire; he created it first, and afterwards reigned over it.

In David the feelings of the man were not lost in the warrior and the statesman. He was eminent for strong family attachment, for deep parental affection. See him lying seven days on the earth, fasting, on

account of the sickness of his infant child; hear his intense lamentation on the death of the rebel son who sought his life. Where can we find a stronger proof of pure fatherly love?

Need his powers as a poet be mentioned? Have they ever been excelled, so far as the range of subject, and the class of poetry to which he devoted himself, is concerned? And if we possessed the necessary information, perhaps we should be able to say as much for his musical powers and attainments. He was evidently gifted with a pure and lofty genius in both these elegant arts.

In the consideration of the character of David, his piety towards God, his earnest, devoted religion, must not be forgotten. When this is spoken of, his foul and flagrant sins are always brought to remembrance. But we should never have known the depth and sincerity, the purity and power of his religion but for these sins. Here we see the deep sorrow of his repentance, the true earnest strivings of an agonized soul, succeeded by the joys of pardon, and happy intercourse with God. No higher testimony to the personal religion of David can be given than is found in the fact, that the out-spoken exercises of his soul, the operations of his faith, hope, and love to God and His sanctuary, exhibited in the Psalms, have virtually become the type and model of experimental and practical spiritual religion in all ages of the church.

There is another aspect of David's character, and one certainly not the least interesting and important, which must not be lost sight of; namely, the prominent position which he was appointed to occupy in the development of the grand scheme of human redemption. If we trace the progress of this Divine plan from the fall of Adam to the close of the New Testament canon,

several persons are found more or less intimately associated with its operation, and in various degrees employed as agents to promote its progress. Abraham, by leaving his family abode at the command of God, and walking in full and unreserved obedience to Him, became the great progenitor of that line from which the Messiah should descend, and was called "the father of the faithful." Isaac and Jacob succeeded to the same vocation; and the latter by his prevalent prayer obtained the glorious name which not only distinguished the nation that descended from him, but adheres to the church in all ages as "the Israel of God." Other holy men subsequently, as priests, prophets, and kings, have in different ways, as instruments in the hand of God, contributed to the proclamation and development of His redeeming plan.

But, of all these, there was no one called to act a more important and prominent part than David. Standing just midway between Abraham and Christ, he was selected to be the last named progenitor of the Messiah, who was from that circumstance called "the Son of David." He was also the real founder of the Hebrew kingdom; for he completed and established that which had scarcely been begun by Saul. For he, by universal submission to the will of Jehovah, gave his kingdom that peculiar character which made it not only typical of the kingdom of Christ, but actually its precursor. As has been already shown, David, by acting uniformly as the vicegerent of Jehovah, exhibited to the world a government under a combination of Divine and human powers in harmonious operation, which set forth in a very striking manner the sovereignty of the incarnate Son of God. Here was the first emblem of this glorious and everlasting kingdom faintly shadowed forth; and David, as the

human heart of this sovereignty, by this means, occupied a very interesting relation to the kingdom of the Redeemer.

From these circumstances we see that David's reign, person, and kingdom, formed a grand epoch in the progress of the work of redemption. From his day, the darkness that had shrouded the Divine promises in preceding times gradually dispersed; the full blaze of prophetic light was soon shed on the scene, but its brightest rays identified the promised Son of God with the Son of David. The throne of Christ was "the throne of David." (Isaiah ix. 7.) The richest blessings of the Gospel are "the sure mercies of David." (Isaiah iv. 3; Acts xiii. 34.) And the coming of Christ Himself is thus set forth: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper." (Jer. xxiii. 5.) Thus in every way does Holy Scripture associate the son of Jesse with the origin, progress, and glories of the kingdom of Christ.

We now close this sketch of the life and reign of this great and good king. If rare endowments of body and mind; if a genius and intellectual power more brilliant and extensive than has often been imparted to any of mankind; if great, continued, and abundant success and glory crowning all his efforts; if the special and abiding approval of heaven; and, above all, if the association of his person, position, and powers with the great purposes of Divine grace, indicate the highest position to which humanity can aspire, then David was, at the very least, one of the greatest and most eminent men that the world has ever seen.

## INDEX.

	Page	Page
<b>A</b>		
<p><i>Abiathar</i>, the escape of, from the massacre at Nob ..... 71</p> <p>— brings the sacred ephod to David ..... 79</p> <p>— wishes to join David in his flight from Jerusalem ..... 269</p> <p><i>Abigail</i> presents provisions to David and his troop ..... 93</p> <p>— becomes a wife of David ... 94</p> <p><i>Abinadab</i>, the ark of God placed in the house of ..... 128</p> <p><i>Abishai</i> accompanies David to the camp of Saul ..... 94</p> <p>— commands a third of the Hebrew army ..... 290</p> <p>— collects troops to pursue Sheba ..... 305</p> <p><i>Abner</i> takes Ishbosheth to Mahanaim ..... 107</p> <p>— marches to Gibeah ..... 108</p> <p>— slays Asahel ..... 109</p> <p>— enters into communication with David ..... 110</p> <p>— waits upon David at Hebron ..... 111</p> <p>— is slain by Joab ..... 111</p> <p>—, the funeral of, attended by David ..... 112</p> <p><i>Absalom</i> orders the assassination of Amnon ..... 260</p> <p>— escapes to Geshur ..... 260</p> <p>— returns to Jerusalem ..... 261</p> <p>— obtains an interview with his father ..... 262</p> <p>— assumes great state and splendour ..... 264</p> <p>— treats the people with great condescension ..... 264</p>	<p><i>Absalom</i>, the professed solicitude of, for the aggrieved ..... 265</p> <p>— goes to Hebron under the pretence of offering sacrifice .. 265</p> <p>— invites Ahithophel to come to him ..... 266</p> <p>— comes to Jerusalem ..... 275</p> <p>—, the army of, musters at Mahanaim ..... 289</p> <p>— is slain by Joab ..... 294</p> <p><i>Achish</i>, king, David places himself under the protection of. .... 61, 96</p> <p>—, gives the city of Ziklag to David ..... 77</p> <p><i>Adonijah</i> aspires to the throne... 344</p> <p>— gives a banquet, at which he intends to be proclaimed king ..... 344</p> <p>— makes his submission to Solomon ..... 347</p> <p>—, the cause of the death of ..... 110</p> <p><i>Adoram</i>, the collector of taxes... 184</p> <p><i>Adullam</i>, David in the cave of... 62</p> <p>—, the town of ..... 63, note</p> <p>—, four hundred men and the family of David join him at ... 67</p> <p>—, eleven officers of the Hebrew army offer their services to David at ..... 75</p> <p><i>Ahimaaz</i> bears tidings to David of the defeat of Absalom ..... 295</p> <p><i>Ahimelech</i> gives the shew-bread to David and his followers ... 60</p> <p>— is slain by the command of Saul ..... 70</p> <p><i>Ahinoam</i> of Jezreel, a wife of David ..... 92</p> <p><i>Ahithophel</i>, chosen to be a counsellor of David ..... 184</p>	

	Page		Page
<i>Ahithophel</i> joins Absalom .....	266	<i>Bathsheba</i> , sickness and death of	
—, the evil advice of, to Absalom .....	276	the child of .....	237, 247
— urges the pursuit of David .....	277	<i>Benaiah</i> , a trumpeter in the tabernacle service.....	159
— hangs himself .....	289	—, the captain of the king's body-guard .....	183
<i>Altar of God</i> , the, at Gibeon, 165, 339		<i>Benjamin</i> , the slingers of.....	88
<i>Amalekites</i> , David makes incursions upon the .....	27	—, cause of the discontent of the tribe of .....	310
—, the, plunder Ziklag .....	99	<i>Bethlehem</i> , David conceals himself in a cavern near.....	62
<i>Amasa</i> joins David at Adullam .....	75	<i>Beth-maachah</i> , David halts at... ..	268
— made the general of Absalom's army .....	289	<i>Beth-shemesh</i> , the profane curiosity of the men of .....	128
— has military possession of Jerusalem.....	300	—, the people of, request to have the ark removed from them.....	128
— made general-in-chief of the Hebrew forces .....	305	<i>Body-guard</i> , the, of David .....	183
<i>Ammonites</i> , the, retreat before Abishai.....	201	<i>Book of Judges</i> , the.....	6
—, the, reduced to captivity.....	250, 252	<i>Bow</i> , the, used as a weapon of war .....	105
<i>Amnon</i> , the evil passion of, for his half-sister .....	258		
— violates Tamar.....	259	C	
— assassinated by the command of Absalom .....	260	<i>Captivity</i> , the, of the Ammonites .....	250, 252
<i>Araunah</i> , the plague stayed at the threshing-floor of .....	335	<i>Ceremonial</i> expiation, the unsatisfactory character of .....	242
<i>Ark of God</i> , the, carried into the land of the Philistines .....	127	<i>Cherethites</i> , the, added to the body-guard of David.....	183
—, returned with a trespass offering .....	127, 128	<i>Chimham</i> , the son of Barzillai, attended the king to Jerusalem .....	302
—, placed in the house of Abinadab .....	128	<i>Chronicles</i> , the First Book of the, xvi. 7-36 .....	146-148
—, lodged in the house of Obed-edom .....	134	<i>Covenant mercies</i> , the, of God with David .....	383, 384
— put into the tabernacle of David .....	139	<i>Crown</i> , the golden, of the king of Ammon, taken by David ...	249
<i>Asahel</i> slain by Abner .....	109	<i>Cushi</i> bears tidings of the death of Absalom to David .....	295
<i>Asaph</i> , an inspired psalmist ...	154		
B		D	
<i>Baal-perazim</i> , the victories of David at .....	123, 124	<i>Damascus</i> garrisoned by David..	204
<i>Baanah</i> and Rechab assassinate Ishbosheth .....	113	<i>David</i> , meaning of the name of .	20
<i>Baleaic Islands</i> , the slingers of the .....	38, note	— the references of, to his parents.....	20, 21
<i>Barzillai</i> , the Gileadite, supplies the wants of David .....	286	— kept his father's sheep.....	22
— meets David on his return to Jerusalem ..	302	—, the early piety of .....	23
<i>Bathsheba</i> is seen by David .....	227	—, the first Psalm of .....	24
— becomes a wife of David ...	229	—, the musical studies of.....	25
		— anointed by the prophet Samuel .....	28

	Page		Page
<i>David</i> , the Divine training of, of the kingship .....	29	<i>David</i> receives provisions from Abigail .....	93
—, the chief study of .....	30	— goes into the camp of Saul .....	94
—, the first appearance of, before Saul .....	34	— seeks the protection of king Achish .....	96
— slays Goliath of Gath .....	38	— consults the sacred ephod .....	99
—, Saul becomes jealous of the popularity of .....	43	—, intelligence of the death of Saul brought to .....	102
— is made Saul's armour-bearer .....	48	— goes to Hebron, where he is anointed King over Judah ...	106
—, Saul casts his javelin at ...	49	—, Abner waits on, at Hebron .....	111
— is made captain over a thousand men .....	50	—, Baanah and Rechab present the head of Ishbosheth to .....	113
— receives Michal, the king's daughter, to wife .....	51	—, the elders of Israel tender to, the government of the whole country .....	114
—, the life of, saved by Michal .....	52	— marks out the principles of his government .....	116
—, the flight of, during a thunderstorm, to Ramah .....	55	— reduces the stronghold of the Jebusites .....	120
— goes to Naioth .....	56	— makes of Jerusalem the Hebrew metropolis .....	121
— returns to Gibeah .....	57	— defeats the Philistines at Baal-perazim .....	123
— proceeds to the little city of Nob .....	60	— directs his attention to the religion of the country .....	125
—, Ahimelech gives the shewbread to .....	60	— builds a tabernacle on Mount Zion, wherein to place the ark .....	130
— places himself under the protection of king Achish .....	61	—, the ark brought into the tabernacle of .....	139
— conceals himself in the cave of Adullam .....	62	— is despised by his wife Michal .....	140
— is joined by his family and four hundred men .....	67	—, the extensive arrangements of, for worship in the tabernacle .....	148
—, eleven eminent officers of the Hebrew army offer their services to .....	75	— an inspired prophet .....	154
— longs for the water of the well of Bethlehem .....	77	— restores the Mosaic services at Gibeon .....	161
— takes refuge in the forest of Hareth .....	78	— builds a palace .....	178, 179
— defeats the Philistines at Keilah .....	78	— organizes a permanent militia .....	182
—, Abiathar, the priest, brings the sacred ephod to .....	79	— chooses Ahithophel, Hushai, and Jonathan as counsellors .....	184
— retreats to the wilderness of Ziph .....	82	—, the prophetic message of Nathan to .....	185
—, Jonathan seeks for and finds .....	82	— subdues and occupies Gath .....	200
—, the Ziphites inform Saul that, is in their neighbourhood .....	83	— conquers the Moabites .....	201
— moves to the wilderness of Maon .....	84	— turns his arms against Hadadezer .....	203
—, Saul in the power of ...	89, 90	— victorious over the Syrians of Damascus .....	204
— solicits a present from Nabal .....	92		





	Page		Page
<i>Endor</i> , Saul consults the witch of	100	<i>Gilboa</i> , Mount, Saul and his sons slain on . . . . .	101
—, the Jewish tradition concerning the witch of . . . . .	100, note	<i>Gob</i> , the Philistine army assembled at . . . . .	322
<i>Engedi</i> , David in the wilderness of . . . . .	92	<i>Goliath</i> of Gath defies the armies of Israel and their God . . . . .	34
<i>Ephes-dammim</i> , the triumph of . . . . .	41, 42	— slain by David . . . . .	38
<i>Ephod</i> , the sacred, brought to David . . . . .	79	—, the sword of, dedicated to God . . . . .	41
—, the sacred, David consults . . . . .	99		
<i>Ephraim</i> , the rivalry between the tribes of Judah and . . . . .	118	H	
—, causes of the discontent of the tribe of . . . . .	311	<i>Hachilah</i> , Saul encamps at . . . . .	94
<i>Expiation</i> , the unsatisfactory character of ritual . . . . .	242	<i>Hadadazer</i> , the power of, the king of Zobah, crushed by David . . . . .	204
F		<i>Hamath</i> , the king of, congratulates David . . . . .	204
<i>Faith</i> and practice, the, of the Hebrew Church . . . . .	165-175	<i>Hanun</i> , the king of the Ammonites, outrages the messengers of David . . . . .	218
<i>Famine</i> , the, in the days of David . . . . .	314	— forms alliances with the Syrians against David . . . . .	219
<i>Farinelli</i> , anecdote of the musician . . . . .	48, note	—, David gains a great victory over . . . . .	222
<i>Frenzy</i> , the, of Saul . . . . .	49	<i>Hareth</i> , David takes refuge in the forest of . . . . .	78
G		<i>Hebrews</i> , the music of the . . . . .	24
<i>Gad</i> , the prophet, offers David his choice of three punishments . . . . .	333	—, the, commenced political existence as an army . . . . .	179
— bids David rear an altar in the threshing-floor of Araunah . . . . .	335	—, the position of the, when David assumed the government . . . . .	181
<i>Gath</i> , David goes to . . . . .	60	<i>Hebron</i> , David visits . . . . .	106
<i>Geshurites</i> , David makes incursions upon the . . . . .	97	—, Abner waits upon David at . . . . .	111
<i>Gezrites</i> , David takes goods and cattle from the . . . . .	97	—, Absalom goes to, under the pretence of offering sacrifice . . . . .	265
<i>Gibeah</i> , David returns to . . . . .	57	<i>Helam</i> , Shobach, a Mesopotamian general, defeated by David at . . . . .	222
—, Abner marches to . . . . .	108	<i>Hiram</i> , the king of Tyre, supplies David with workmen and timber . . . . .	179
<i>Gibeon</i> , the Mosaic tabernacle at . . . . .	125	<i>Hushai</i> joins David in his flight from Absalom . . . . .	273
—, David restores the Mosaic services at . . . . .	161	— returns to Jerusalem to discover the plans of Absalom . . . . .	274
—, Zadok, the high priest, officiates at . . . . .	162	— is admitted into the councils of Absalom . . . . .	275
—, the altar of God at . . . . .	165	— objects to the immediate pursuit of David . . . . .	277
—, the appointed place of sacrifice . . . . .	337		
—, the spot where the temple was to be erected for the national worship . . . . .	338	I	
<i>Gihon</i> , Solomon anointed king over Israel at . . . . .	345, 346	<i>Idolatry</i> , the effects of, on public morals . . . . .	8

	Page		Page
<i>Inheritance</i> , the Hebrew law of	19	<i>Jonathan</i> forms a friendship for	
<i>Ishbi-benob</i> , a Philistine giant,		David .....	39
assails David .....	322	—, Saul casts a javelin at .....	59
<i>Ishbosheth</i> , Abner takes, to Ma-		— finds David in the wilder-	
hanaim, where he assumes the		ness of Ziph, and makes a	
sovereignty over Israel .....	108	covenant with him .....	83
— assassinated by Rechab and		<i>Josephus</i> , the opinion of, concern-	
Beanah .....	113	ing the sin of David in num-	
<i>Israel</i> , the Philistines invade the		bering the people .....	329
land of .....	32	<i>Judah</i> , the rivalry between the	
—, the men of, quarrel with		tribes of Ephraim and .....	304
the men of Judah .....	304	<i>Judges</i> , the Book of .....	6
<i>Israelites</i> , the social condition of			
the, improved by Saul .....	16		
<i>Ittai</i> of Gath refuses to leave			
David in his adversity .....	268		
— commands a third of the			
Hebrew army .....	290		
		K	
J		<i>Keilah</i> , the people of, severely	
<i>Jabesh-Gilead</i> , the men of, bury		injured by the Philistines .....	78
Saul and his sons .....	106	—, David defeats the Philis-	
<i>Jahaziel</i> , a trumpeter in the		tines at .....	78
tabernacle services .....	159	—, Saul invests .....	79
<i>Jashobeam</i> joins David in the		<i>Kirjath-jearim</i> , the ark of God at	128
cave of Adullam .....	75		
<i>Jebusites</i> , the, defeated by David	120		
<i>Jedidiah</i> , Solomon also called ...	257		
<i>Jehoshaphat</i> , the compiler of re-			
ords .....	184		
<i>Jerusalem</i> selected for a metro-			
polis .....	118		
—, David retires from, during			
the rebellion of Absalom .....	267		
—, the elders of Israel invite			
the return of David to .....	301		
<i>Jesse</i> , the prophet Samuel visits,			
to anoint a king .....	27		
<i>Joab</i> sent to the frontier of			
Judah to watch the Israelitish			
general .....	108		
— slays Abner .....	111		
— besieges Rabbah .....	227		
— commands a third of the			
Hebrew army .....	290		
— expostulates with David re-			
specting his grief for Absalom	296		
— murders Amasa .....	306		
—, the scruples of, about num-			
bering the people .....	329		
— is executed for treason by			
Solomon .....	364		
		L	
		<i>Lamentation</i> , the song of, for	
		Saul and Jonathan .....	102
		<i>Life</i> , David's certainty about a	
		future .....	248
		M	
		<i>Machir</i> of Gilead supplies the	
		necessities of David .....	286
		<i>Mahanaim</i> , Abner takes Ishbo-	
		sheth to .....	107
		—, David retreats to .....	285
		<i>Maon</i> , David in the wilderness of	
		84	
		<i>Merab</i> , the elder daughter of Saul,	
		promised to David as a wife ...	50
		<i>Metheg-ammah</i> , meaning of the	
		phrase .....	200
		<i>Mephibosheth</i> , a grant made to,	
		of the lands of Saul .....	218
		<i>Michal</i> , a daughter of Saul, given	
		to David as a wife .....	51
		— aids the escape of David ...	52
		— given to Phalti to wife ...	110
		— despises David .....	140
		—, the five sons of, hanged by	
		the Gibeonites .....	314
		<i>Militia</i> , the, of David .....	182

	Page		Page
<i>Moabites</i> , the, conquered by David .....	201	<i>Philip V</i> , of Spain, the effect of music on .....	48, <i>note</i>
<i>Mount Gilboa</i> , Saul and his sons slain on .....	101	<i>Philistines</i> , the, inflict great injuries on the people of Keilah .....	78
<i>Mount Zion</i> , David erects a tabernacle on .....	130	—, invade the Hebrew territory .....	123
<i>Music</i> , the effect of, in the removal of disease .....	47, <i>note</i>	<i>Poetry</i> employed in the service of God .....	155-157
— employed in the service of God .....	157	<i>Practice</i> and faith, the, of the Hebrew Church .....	165-175
		<i>Priests</i> not employed in the tabernacle of David .....	149-159
N		<i>Psalms</i> ii., 195-iii., 284-iv., 286-vi., 240-ix., 40, 151-xi., 59-xv., 158-xvii., 72-xviii., 53, 324-5-xx., 223-xxi., 252-xxii., 85-xxiii., 24-xxix., 138, 307-xxvii., 308-xxix., 318-xxx., 340-xxxi., 79-xxxii., 243-xxxiii., 253-xxxiv., 64-xxxv., 73-xxxviii., 239-xl. 8-10, 153-xli., 279-xliii., 280-li., 2-2-liv., 71-liv., 84-lv., 271-lvi., 61-lvii., 91-lviii., 91-liv., 52-lx., 209-lxi., 287-lxiv., 74-lxv., 319-lxviii., 180-lxx., 290-lxxi., 291-lxxii., 358-xcvi., 136-xcvii., 205-xcviii., 2-6-ci., 115-cvii., 212-cix., 72-cxvii., 215-cxviii., 163, 215-cxx., 95-cxxii., 301-cxxxi., 341-cxxxii., 135-cxxxix., 116-cxl., 73-cxli., 6-cxlii., 69-cxliii., 280-cxlv., 297-cxlv., 349.	
<i>Nabal</i> , David solicits a present from .....	93		
<i>Nachon</i> , Uzzah slain at the threshing-floor of .....	134		
<i>Naiioth</i> , the prophet Samuel takes David to .....	56		
—, Saul prophesies at .....	57		
<i>Nathan</i> , the prophetic message of, to David .....	185-193		
— denounces a threefold punishment upon David .....	231		
<i>Nob</i> , David goes to .....	60		
—, the Mosaic tabernacle at ..	60		
—, the inhabitants of, slain by Saul .....	71		
—, the escape of Abiathar from ..	71		
		O	
<i>Obed-edom</i> , the ark of God in the house of .....	134		
<i>Ornan</i> , the Jebusite, an altar reared upon the threshing-floor of .....	336		
		P	
<i>Parents</i> of David, the, placed under the protection of the king of Moab .....	76	<i>Ramah</i> , David flees to the prophet Samuel at .....	56
<i>Pelethites</i> , the, added to the body-guard of David .....	183	<i>Rechab</i> and Baanah assassinate Ishbosheth .....	113
<i>Phalti</i> , the sorrow of, when his wife Michal is taken from him .....	110, 111	" <i>Record</i> ," meaning of the term, to .....	150
<i>Phenicia</i> , the commerce of .....	177	<i>Religion</i> of the Hebrew Church, the, based on the revealed word of God .....	172
—, the intercourse of, with the Hebrews .....	178	<i>Rephaim</i> , the Philistines invade the valley of .....	123, 124
		<i>Ritual</i> expiation, the unsatisfactory character of .....	242
		<i>Rizpah</i> , the two sons of, hanged by the Gibeonites .....	314
		<i>Ruth</i> , conjecture concerning .....	76

S		Page
<i>Salvation</i> , enjoyed by the members of the Hebrew Church .....	169	
<i>Samuel</i> , the prophet, measures of reform inaugurated by .....	10	
—, commanded to anoint a son of Jesse to be king instead of Saul .....	27	
—, David flees to, at Ramah...	56	
—, takes David to Naioth ...	56	
—, the death of.....	92	
—, the second book of, chap. i. 19-27 .....	102	
<i>Salt</i> , the valley of, David's victories over the Edomites in.....	213	
<i>Sanctuary</i> , the extreme desire of David for the privileges of the .....	283	
<i>Saph</i> , a Philistine giant, is slain .....	322	
<i>Saul</i> , the first king of Israel ...	12	
—, character of the reign of .....	18-18	
—, the first appearance of David before .....	85	
— becomes jealous of David...	43	
—, the melancholy of .....	45	
—, the Spirit of the Lord departed from .....	46	
— makes David his armour-bearer .....	48	
— casts his javelin at David...	49	
—, the frenzy of .....	49	
— prophesies at Naioth .....	57	
— casts a javelin at his son Jonathan .....	59	
— in the power of David ...	89, 90	
— encamps at Hachelah .....	94	
— consults the witch of Endor .....	100	
— and his sons slain on Mount Gilboa .....	101	
<i>Shammah</i> joins David in the cave of Adullam .....	75	
<i>Sheba</i> , the proclamation of .....	304	
— retreats to the fortified city of Abel-Beth-Maachah .....	306	
—, the head of, thrown over the wall to Joab .....	306	
<i>Sheep-shearing</i> , the time of, among the Hebrews .....	93	
<i>Shimei</i> curses David in his flight .....	274	
—, the abject penitence of ...	302	
— put to death by Solomon...	364	
— the Ramathite, superintends the vineyards .....	183	
<i>Shobach</i> commands the allied armies of the Syrians .....	222	
<i>Shobi</i> , the kindness of, to David .....	252	
— waits on David with presents .....	285	
<i>Slingers</i> , the, of the Balearic Islands .....	38, note	
<i>Solomon</i> , the birth of .....	257	
— appointed to succeed to the throne .....	343, 353	
— anointed king over Israel at Gihou .....	345-6	
—, the charge of David to ...	353	
—, the solemn advice of the dying David to .....	361	
— reminded of the kindness of Barzillai, the murder of Joab, and the treason of Shimei.....	361	
<i>Sword</i> of Goliath, the, dedicated to God .....	41	
T		
<i>Tabernacle</i> of David, the shekinah manifested in the .....	144	
—, the worship in the .....	145	
—, the Mosaic, at Nob.....	60	
—, the ark of the covenant not in .....	125	
—, at Gibeon.....	125, 141	
—, the centre of the Mosaic system .....	126	
—, at Gilgal .....	127	
—, at Shiloh.....	127	
<i>Tamar</i> lives in seclusion in the house of Absalom .....	250	
<i>Thanksgivings</i> , the national, of the Hebrews .....	224, 225	
<i>Toi</i> , the king of Hamath, congratulates David .....	204	
<i>Tradition</i> , the Jewish, of the witch of Endor .....	100, note	
U		
<i>Uriah</i> sent to Jerusalem .....	228	
— slain.....	229	
<i>Uzzah</i> slain for touching the ark of God .....	134	
W		
<i>Word</i> of God, the revealed, the		

	Page		Page
basis of the religion of the Hebrew Church .....	172	<i>Ziba</i> , the estates of Mephibosheth conferred upon .....	274
<i>Words</i> of David, the last ...	865-384	<i>Ziklag</i> , the city of, given to David by king Achish .....	97
Z			
<i>Zadok</i> , the high-priest, officiates at Gibeon .....	162	— plundered by the Amalekites .....	98, 99
— wishes to join David in his flight .....	269	<i>Zion</i> , the Jebusites expelled from Holy Hill .....	121 165
<i>Ziba</i> informs David that Mephibosheth is alive .....	217	<i>Ziph</i> , David seeks refuge from Saul in the wilderness of .....	82
— presents refreshments to David and his followers .....	274	<i>Ziphites</i> , the ingratitude of the —, the, give Saul information of David .....	79, 83, 84 94

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